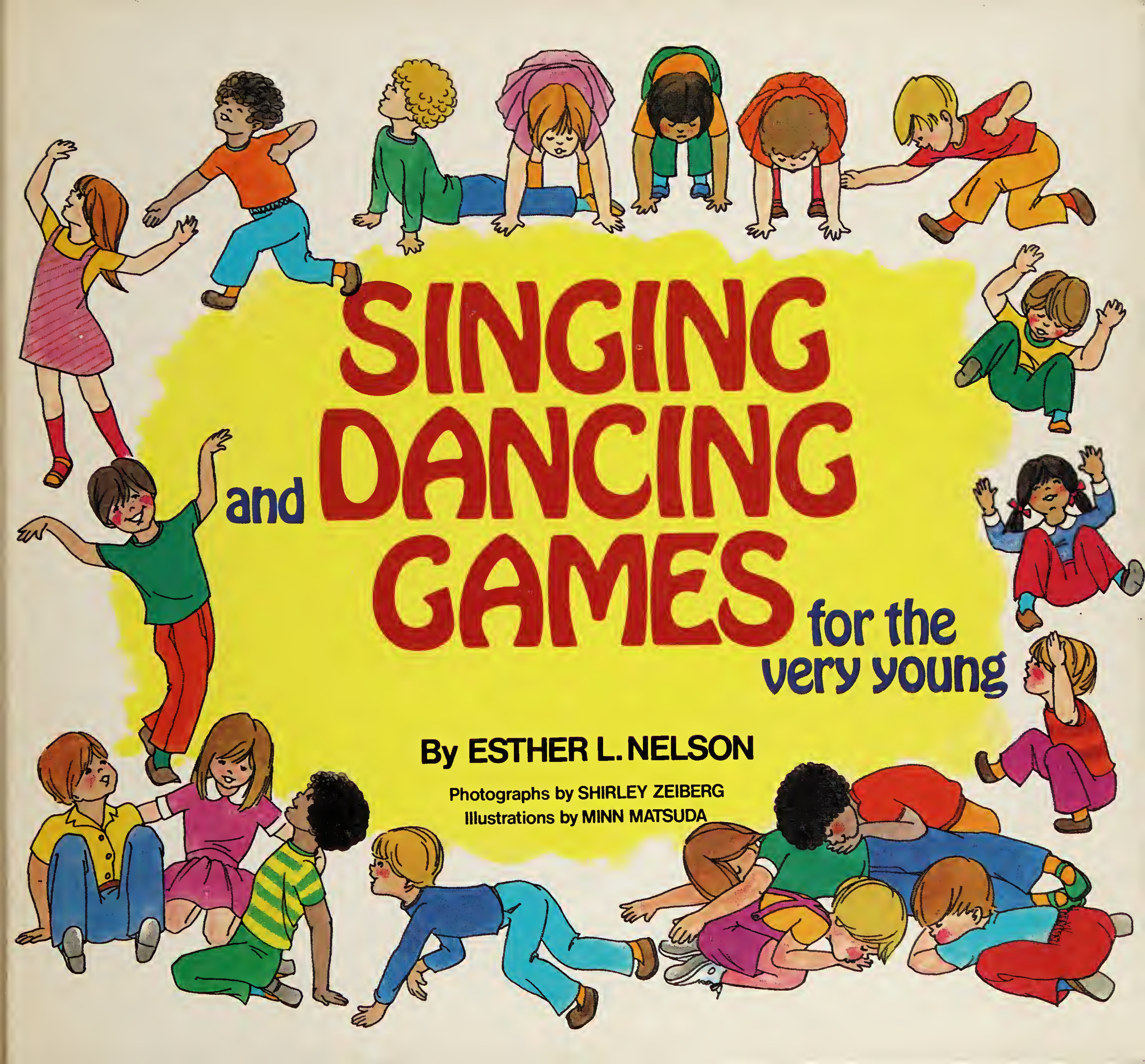


SINGING and DANCING GAMES for the very young

By ESTHER L. NELSON

Photographs by SHIRLEY ZEIBERG
Illustrations by MINN MATSUDA



Debby Reno —
P.D.S.



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STERLING PUBLISHING CO., INC. NEW YORK

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For our dear friend David Levine who loved to dance!

Sixth Printing, 1982

Published by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.
Two Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016
Distributed in Australia by Oak Tree Press Co., Ltd.
P.O. Box K514 Haymarket, Sydney 2000, N.S.W.
Distributed in the United Kingdom by Blandford Press
Link House, West Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1LL, England
Distributed in Canada by Oak Tree Press Ltd.
℅ Canadian Manda Group, 215 Lakeshore Boulevard East
Toronto, Ontario M5A 3W9
Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 77-79513
Sterling ISBN 0-8069-4568-0 Trade
4569-9 Library
7572-5 Paper

Thanks to Dr. John V. Pozzi, Roosevelt School, New Rochelle; to Rosetta Newton of the Elizabeth Rockwell School of Dance, Bedford, New York; to Mamie Williams of the Williamsbridge Day Care Center, Bronx, New York; and to Elizabeth Falconer of the Highland Nursery School in Chappaqua, for their assistance; to colleagues, Ruth Strecker and Bernice Silver, for their help, and to Irene Bloch for the musical arrangements. Again thanks to my incomparable editor Sheila Barry for her continued support, and special thanks to Bruce Haack and the thousands of young children who have shared this fun with me over many years.

CONTENTS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Music and movement come naturally to young children—even before speech. There are many 2-year-olds who can't talk yet, but they can dance. Young children also learn a tremendous amount when they sing and dance. They learn to be aware of their bodies; they learn about each other and about the outside world. They learn to listen and understand, to follow directions, to wait their turn, to work in a group. They learn new coordinations, but most of all, they learn the joy of movement and music and rhythm, and that pleasure will stay with them for a lifetime.

As every parent and teacher knows, a child learns more quickly when you look into his or her eyes and sustain that contact. All of these songs and dances should be taught that way. You need to "grab" the interest of the child and hold it throughout. Don't lose that precious eye contact. Each child must focus on you as you sing, as you give directions. From this, they go on to learn the other things—but this is where the "clue-ing in" starts. Don't be afraid to insist that all eyes be on you!

A parent can work with his or her own child on a one-to-one basis or a teacher can work with a group of up to 30 or more children. But you, whether you're parent or teacher or leader, are the source, and the initial sense of interest, life and enthusiasm must come from you. If you are animated, the children will be animated, too. They mirror your expressions, so use your face and your voice freely and expressively. Children are excellent imitators, and they will imitate you down to the last movement. If you are singing to a group of children or doing a finger play and you unconsciously scratch your head, they will also scratch their heads. Encourage this imitation: that is how they learn. You set the expressions and the movements, and they will learn quickly. They need to watch you and learn from you; otherwise, they will imitate each other, and since none of them knows what to do or how to do it, nothing much will come out. But when you ask them to dance or move freely, using all the parts of their bodies, there is no imitation. It is an exploration of space and their bodies within it, as they learn what their bodies can do.

Since the pieces in this book were specially selected for young children—whose attention spans are short—they are brief, to-the-point, and very effective. They are also designed for instant success, so that the children get an immediate sense of satisfaction. Encourage the children to use their voices—not to shout—but to sing along with you. A good sense of self comes from being able to use your voice freely.

Don't worry about how well the children do the dances or exercises, as long as they are focusing and trying. There is no need to judge them or compare one to another. Each child will do what he or she can; there's no rushing their physical development. Each time you repeat the same dance, however, they get better at it; their coordination improves, their body awareness heightens, they move more parts of their bodies, their sense of rhythm develops and their joy increases.

Since one of the aims is to achieve ease and freedom, ask the children to take off their shoes and socks. Moving in socks involves the danger of slipping, and it feels good to have your bare feet relate to the floor.

If you're lucky enough to have a piano and are able to play it, use it whenever you can, or use a guitar or an autoharp. If they aren't available, use your voice and sing. It is ideal to have another adult working with you; then he or she can play the instrument while you work directly with the children and participate with them.

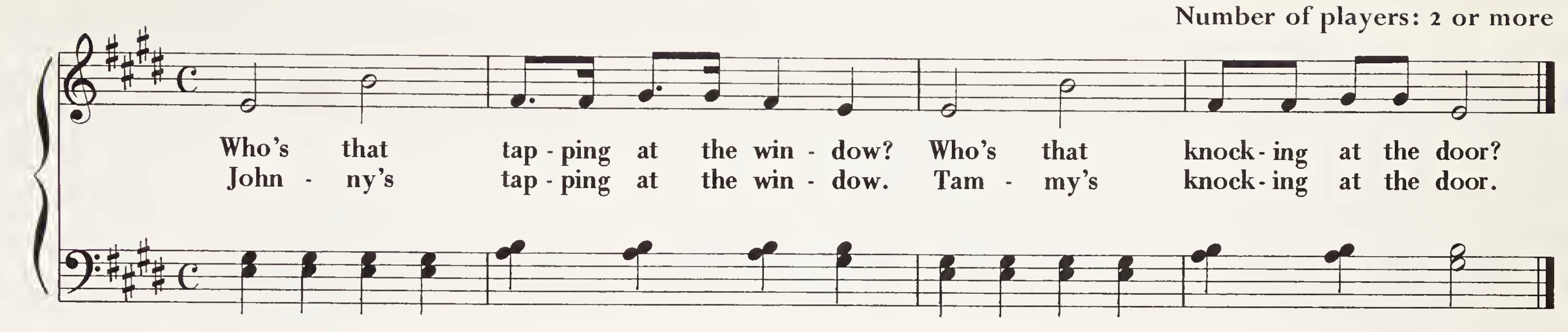
You can use most of the games in this book with children from 2 to 8 years old. You'll find age ranges listed at the back of the book, but remember that they are flexible. They very much depend on the sophistication of the group. Use your judgement. Some very young children are quite capable of working far above their age level. And there are times when an older group enjoys doing something designed for the little ones; it is reassuring, and it gives them a chance to return to the level of their younger sisters and brothers.

Use the material the way it suits you, and it will work for you. Use it in a special time set aside for music and movement, or use it in spare moments to fill up waiting time—out on the grass, in the classroom, or walking down the street. Whichever way you enjoy it, just remember that music and dance are wonderful outlets for feeling and learning and growing.



WHO'S THAT TAPPING AT THE WINDOW?

Number of players: 2 or more



Who's that tapping at the window?
Who's that knocking at the door?
Johnny's tapping at the window.
Tammy's knocking at the door.

Even the littlest children love to hear their names sung individually, and you will see a secret smile creep over each face as you call their names in this song.

Sit with the children around you either at the piano or, if you're playing a guitar or an autoharp, on the floor, and sing this song quietly and magically. Simple as it is, it has a touch of mystery. The children listen for their names and at their turn, they tap the floor quietly on the word "tapping," or knock loudly on the word "knocking." Encourage them to sing with you.

When you've exhausted the names of the children in the group, you can go on to use "My dog is tapping," "My cat is knocking," "My friend is tapping," "My cousin is knocking at the door," what-have-you.

FABULOUS FINGERS

Ask what you need your fingers for and you will get answers like, "To open the door with," "to play the piano," "to pour the orange juice." Starting with that, read this poem while the children act out the things in it with their fingers.

If the group is large, divide in half. While one half does the finger movements, the other half can use any available percussion instruments to accompany the verses. If you don't have any instruments, shake a box of paper clips, play with two pencils—beating one against the other—or use your shoe to beat a rhythm against the desk. Don't forget to change parts.

Number of players: 1 or more

I love my fingers, they're good and true,
There are so many things my fingers can do.

I can shake my fingers until they fly.
They can bend and stretch and reach up high.

I can put them on the floor and make them walk.
They can bow to each other and nod and talk.

I can wiggle them and wriggle them and
tangle them up,
And pull them apart with a great big POP!

I love my fingers, they're good and true.
And there are *so* many things my fingers can do!

OPEN SHUT THEM

Number of players: 1 or more



OPEN SHUT THEM

Open shut them,
Open shut them,
Give a little clap.

Open shut them,
Open shut them,
Put them in your lap.

Creep them, creep them,
Creep them, creep them,
Up to your little chin.

Open up your little mouth
But DO NOT PUT THEM IN!

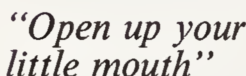
This charming song has a special appeal to very young children. Even 2-year-olds are transfixed by it. The only movement is done with your fingers, so get the children close around you, sing the song with great animation, and you will get their full attention. Invite them to sing it with you.

On the word "Open," spread you fingers apart and hold them in front of you, palms facing out.

On the next word, "shut," make a fist right where you are. Repeat these movements on the second line.

On the third line, start clapping right away and do five claps in all. Encourage the children to do the movements with you. Some little children react slowly, and they may not join you until the word "clap," but that is fine. They must go at their own pace.





"Open up your little mouth"



"But DO NOT PUT THEM IN!"

The second stanza is the same as the first, but on the third line, slap your thighs five times as you "put them in your lap."

In the third stanza, use thumb and index finger of each hand and mysteriously creep them up from your belly button to your chin.

On the last verse, open your mouth as the song says, really wide, after the word "mouth." Then, on the last line, sing the capitalized words fast and put both hands behind your back quickly.



Another way to be "very very small": Go down on your knees, pull your arms under you, and put your head on your hands on the floor. Nicole, on the left, is new to the class. She hasn't learned to listen for her cue.

I'M VERY VERY SMALL OR I'M VERY VERY TALL

Number of players: 2 or more



This guessing game is a good way to introduce young children to group games. Even though you do it in a group, each child actually works alone.

Choose one child to hide his or her eyes. It is a good idea to have the child also turn away from the group, as the temptation is great to peek. Choose another child to be the leader, whom all the children will watch and imitate.

I'm very very small

On this, all the children crouch, rest their elbows on their knees with arms crossed and heads down.

Or I'm very very tall.

They all stretch up on their toes, lift their arms and their heads and stretch up high.

Sometimes small

The children crouch again, as for the first line.

And sometimes tall—

They stretch up on their toes, lifting arms, as for the second line.

Guess which I am now!

It is up to the leader to decide whether to be tall or small. Everyone else watches and imitates him or her. The child with the closed eyes must guess what the children are—small or tall. If the guesser doesn't respond, call him or her by name and ask which they are. Whether the guess is right ("Great") or wrong ("That was a good try"), the guessing child now joins the group and you choose a new guesser and a new leader, and the game repeats.

SALLY GO ROUND THE MOON

Number of players: 1 or more



Sally go round the moon.
Sally go round the stars.
Sally go round the chimney top,
Every afternoon BOOM!

This old English song is great fun for the youngest of children, even with older 2-year-olds. The only movements involved are turning and falling, and everyone is familiar with them! Do it in a circle or anywhere in the room.

On the first line, the children put their index fingers in the air, look up at them, and turn in that direction around themselves.

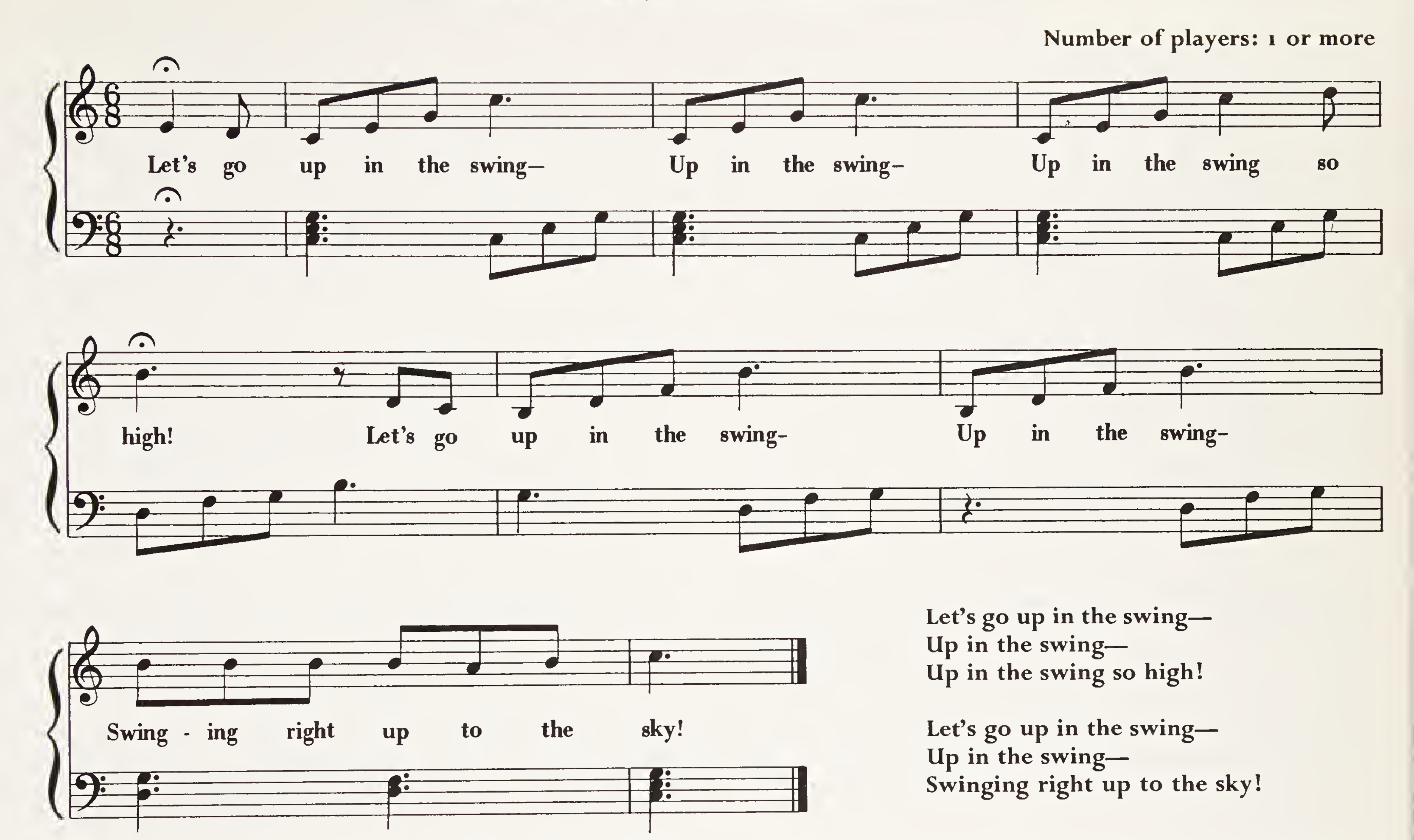
On the second line, they change to the first finger of the other hand and reverse direction.

They reverse directions again on the third line, and fall down on the BOOM. If the children are older, you may want to ask them to jump up, clap their hands, and then fall down on BOOM.

The changes in direction are easy for older children, but if you're working with very young ones, just keep them going in the same direction for the second and third lines and even for the first part of the fourth line. They will get so dizzy that the natural thing to do is fall down at the end.

LET'S GO UP IN THE SWING

Number of players: 1 or more



Let's go up in the swing—
Up in the swing—
Up in the swing so high!

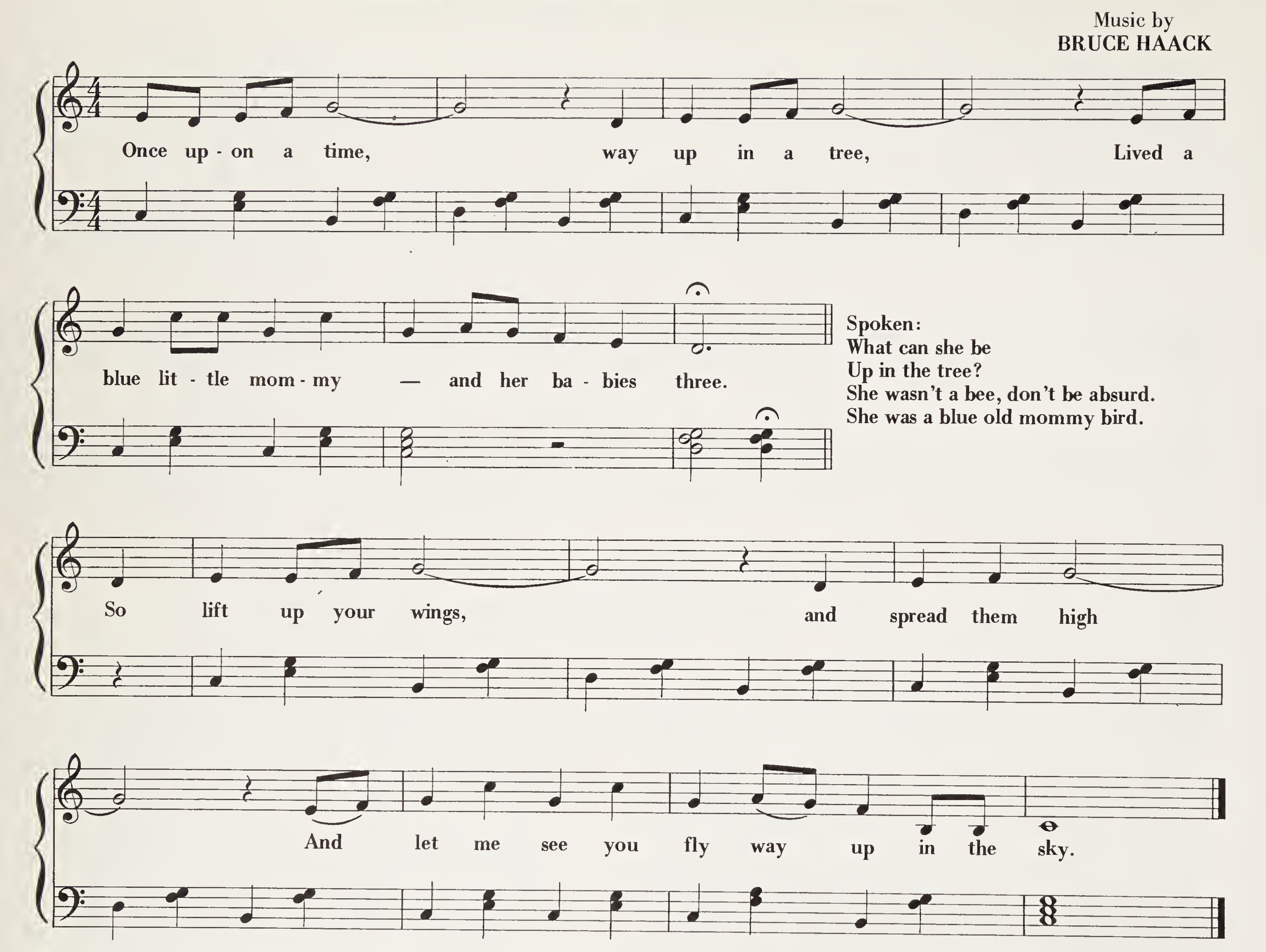
Let's go up in the swing—
Up in the swing—
Swinging right up to the sky!

This song is great to sing as you push a young child in a swing, but you can also do it at home or at school. It is so easy and natural that even 2-year-olds love it. The basic movement is lifting your arms up in front—way up high—and then lowering them and stretching them far behind you. Just make sure that you lift them on the word "up."

You can do it sitting on a chair in a leisurely way, or standing up: lift high on the word "up," and then bend your knees and squat with your arms behind you on the word "swing."

To get an even stronger swing, go onto your toes on "up," and reach up with your arms until, on the word "swing," you drop your arms and body and bounce with your knees as your arms swing (stretched) behind you. Bounce again as you lift your arms and then jump on the next "up," and at end of the song. This is tiring for adults, but children love it.

WHAT CAN SHE BE UP IN THE TREE?



WHAT CAN SHE BE UP IN THE TREE?

Number of players: 4 or more

This guessing song is the universal story of a mommy and daddy and their babies. Most young children love that, and it also gives them a chance to be different animals. What kind of a mommy (or daddy) is it—bird, worm, fish or guess what?

If the group is made up of 2- to 4-year-olds, it works best if you play the parent and do the singing. If possible, get someone else to play the piano for you. With 5- to 7-year-olds, some of the more mature children can take turns playing the parents. Don't worry about having the "right" number of babies for the verse; any number will do.

Designate one spot in the room—a corner is good because it is enclosed—as "home." All the children start by sitting there, babies really close to the parent and to each other. The "parent" should cuddle them a little; they love it.

The first five lines of each stanza tell the story and set the stage. On the last two lines, the children do the movements of that animal. The song tells them exactly what to do. If they need more music to get once around the room, then repeat the last two lines of the music. The first two and last two lines are sung. The four in the middle are spoken.

Once upon a time, way up in a tree,
Lived a blue little mommy—and her babies three.
What can she be
Up in the tree?
She wasn't a bee, don't be absurd.
She was a blue old mommy bird.
So lift up your wings and spread them high
And let me see you fly way up in the sky.

Once upon a time, deep down in the ground,
Lived a brown little daddy—and babies all around.
What can he be
Down in the ground?
He wasn't a mole, though he did squirm.
He was a brown little daddy worm.
So lie down flat and start to wiggle.
Move your hips along the floor and really jiggle.

The wiggle-jiggle is difficult and doesn't cover much ground, so don't try to go all around the room with it; just a bit away is enough, and back to your home. Remember to put your hands behind your back, as worms have no hands.

Once upon a time, on a sunny shore,
Lived a green old daddy—and his babies four.
What can he be
On that sunny shore?
He wasn't a fish. He wasn't a dog sitting on that log.
He was a green old daddy frog.
So bend down low and jump up high,
Land on the ground, hands-on-the-floor, and jump some more.

Run together the words "hands-on-the-floor" very fast.

Once upon a time, behind a door,
Lived a gray old mommy—and her kittens four.
And her kittens four?
Oh, I made a mistake!
Now you all know what was behind that door—
Just think of that! She was a gray old mommy cat.
So get down on four legs and stretch your knees,
And creep like a kitty cat, if you please!

THE TURKEY IS A FUNNY BIRD

Number of players: 1 or more



The turkey is a funny bird.
His head goes, "Bobble, bobble,"
And all he knows is just one word—
"Gobble, gobble, gobble."

This very easy song is delightful at any time, but especially at Thanksgiving. As you all sing the second line, nod your head up and down with each "bobble." On the third line as you sing "just one word," shake your finger once on each word. On the fourth line, nod your head once for each "gobble." The children may have a hard time distinguishing between the bobble and the gobble, so sing it very clearly, and make sure that they clue in to the right word. It teaches them to focus on you and listen more carefully.

ROCK-A-BYE BABY

Number of players: 2 or more



Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.

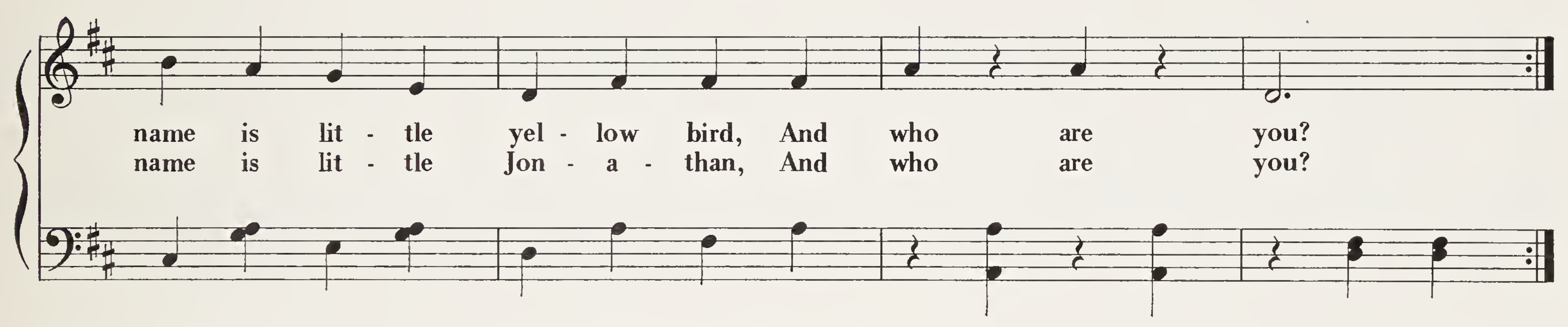
This comfortably familiar song has a lovely rocking movement that the children do while they sing.

Everyone sits on the floor—near the piano or in a circle—and puts the soles of their feet together. This may take a bit of doing, until the children realize where their soles are. Bend your knees way out so that the soles of your feet are leaning directly against each other. Now put your arms between your legs and hold onto your toes with both hands. Lift your chest and head up high. As you sing, lean way over to one side until your head is on the floor on the underlined words. Make sure to rock your entire body and not just your head. And don't let go of your toes—if you do, your foot position will fall apart! Then lean to the other side until your head is on the floor, and keep rocking gently from side to side. Finish with your head down and stay there a few seconds, as a finale.

MY NAME IS LITTLE YELLOW BIRD

Number of players: 2 - 12





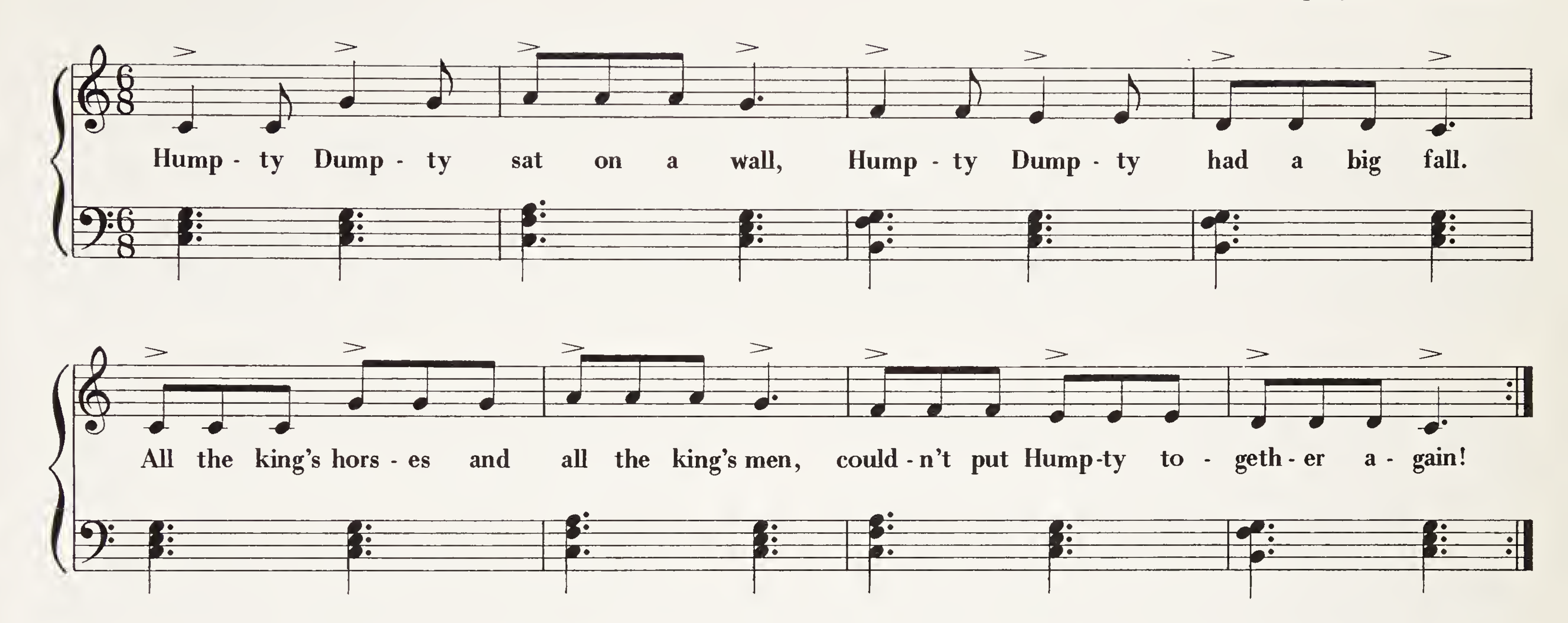
My name is little yellow bird,
Yellow bird, yellow bird,
My name is little yellow bird,
And who are you?

This song, like "Who's That Tapping at the Window," mentions each child's name individually. It is a good song to use when you're working with children who don't know each other, so they have a chance to learn each other's names. If some children are embarrassed to sing their names alone, help them out and sing with them, or ask the other children to join in and sing, too.

Sing the first three lines of the song yourself. When you get to the last line, sing out loud and clear and point your finger at one of the children. That child sings the whole verse again, but substitutes his or her name for "yellow bird": "My name is little Jonathan," for example, and then points to another child on the last line. This continues until every child has had a turn. Ask the last child to point to you; the children love to hear you sing your name. You may want to change the line to "My name is big . . . ," and instead of the last "And who are you?" sing "And that's the end of our song!"

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Number of players: 1 or more



Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a big fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again!

Almost all of the children will know this nursery rhyme, but they don't know the movements that go with it. When they learn them, they love them.

Set the stage by telling them that they are Humpty Dumpty, sitting tall and proud on the wall. Ask them to sit with you—around the piano or in a circle—with their legs together, stretched out in front of them, and their arms out stiffly to the side.

As they sit tall and erect and sing the first two lines, they rock eight times, alternating sides (4 times to each side), putting one hand on the floor and leaning way over toward it with their bodies stiff. Make sure they lean their heads over, too, with their bodies. On the word "fall," they fall straight back until they are lying flat on their backs. On the last two lines, they kick their legs high up in the air, really hard, bending their knees, as if they are bicycle riding.

WHERE IS THUMBKIN?

Number of players: 1 or more



This classic finger play is a dramatic dialogue—not between two people—but between two fingers. The music is "Frère Jacques."

Where is thumbkin?
Where is thumbkin?

Make fists with both hands as you sing the first two lines, but keep them behind your back.

Here I am.
Here I am.

Bring one hand in front of you and lift the thumb on the first line. On the next, do the same thing with the other hand and the other thumb.

How are you today, sir?

Tilt your head to the right side and look at your left

thumb on this line. At the same time, your left thumb bends and stretches, as if it is talking and asking the question.

Very well, I thank you.

Tilt your head to the left side, while your right thumb does the "talking."

Run away.
Run away.

On the first line, speed one hand back where it started —behind your back. On the next line, the other hand follows.

The entire song repeats, but this time we sing:

Where is pointer?
Where is pointer?
Here I am.
Here I am.

How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run away.
Run away.

Pointer is the index finger, and he bends and stretches when he talks, the same way thumbkin did. Remember to focus very sharply on each finger as it talks and to turn your head from one side to the other.

The next verse is in the same format, but you sing:

Where is tall man?

Tall man is the middle finger. Then comes:

Where is ring man?

This is the fourth finger, and it is difficult to raise, even for adults, as it is the weakest finger with the smallest range of movement, but it is worth a try. One way to do it: hold all the other fingers down with your thumb.

The next verse is:

Where is baby?

Baby is your pinky. Try singing this verse in a high baby voice an entire octave higher than the other verses and very quietly. Little children identify with this, or perhaps they feel above it, that they've outgrown it, but either way a special smile creeps across their faces.

Sing the last stanza with lots of deep voice (especially in contrast to "baby") and use all your fingers:

Where are all the men?
Where are all the men?
Here we are.
Here we are.

How are you today, sirs?
Very well, we thank you.
Run away.
Run away.

On "Here we are," bring your entire hand in front of you and shake it forward three times with stiff fingers. Keep them stiff throughout the dialogue. That makes it more official and important and ends the game on a strong note.

PICKING APPLES FROM THE TREE

Number of players: 1 or more

This dancing game is fun to perform—what child doesn't love the idea of picking apples?—and it teaches many new coordinations.

You are the apple tree and you stand in a corner of the room. Your arms are branches, full of beautiful, juicy red apples; hold them up high. The children sit in the diagonally opposite corner. You will be calling them—one by one (by name)—to come to the tree. Don't call the second child until the first child has completed his or her turn. As you call the children, they bend down low, with hands behind their backs, and run to you. As they run, they move their arms up slowly and raise their bodies. By the time they arrive at the tree, they are standing tall, with arms lifted high. They must stop just before they get to the tree and never actually touch it. Then they reach up to pick the apples, jumping up high as they try to get as many as they can.

Really insist that they follow your directions, starting low and ending high, jumping in place, lifting arms and heads and looking up at the apples they are picking; the more precisely they follow them, the more they'll enjoy the game.

After they jump four or five times, say to them, "That was very good. Now show me how many apples you have." It's a lovely moment: a marvelous gleam comes into their eyes as they cup their hands in yours and you say, "How many apples did you get, Susan?" The answers depend on the age, confidence and sophistication of the child and they vary from one to infinity. Whatever the answer, say, "That's great," or something else encouraging, looking into the child's eyes when you say it. Then the child returns to the corner and you call the next apple-picker. When each child has had a turn, call the entire group to come from the corner and run to the tree together. Once more, they show you the apples they have picked. Then ask them to put them into the apple barrel—which is wherever you want them to finish up. Explain the position of the apple barrel to the children at this point.

If the group is large, it will take too long for each child to pick apples individually, so do it in pairs, or in three's.

If there is another adult with the group, he or she can accompany you by playing a run on the piano, as the children run toward the tree. He or she just turns the back of the hand toward the piano, and with the first two fingers, runs all the way up the white keys. On the jumping part, play any notes at all four or five times. Or play it all on a drum or tambourine, or with a stick on a piece of wood, or with shoes. Any percussive sound is helpful. Make the sounds fast for the running part, and strong and sharp for the jumping part.

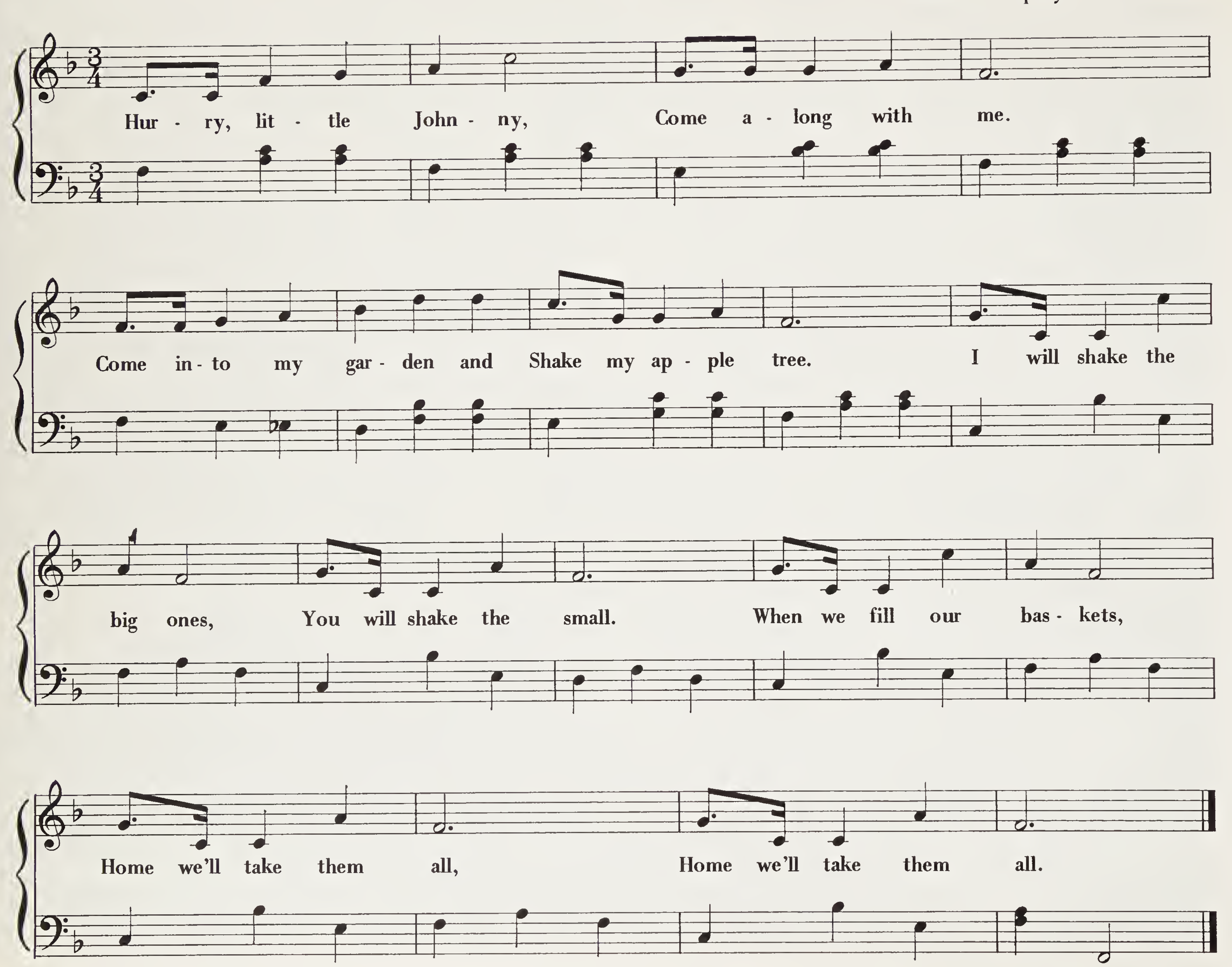
You may want to follow this game with "Hurry, Little Johnny" on page 26, another apple-picking song.



What do you think of these apples? When you call the entire group, they run to the tree and jump up to pick apples—all at the same time. Then ask them all over again to show you how many apples they picked.

HURRY, LITTLE JOHNNY

Number of players: 2 or more



HURRY, LITTLE JOHNNY

This delightful song is especially appropriate in the autumn. It is a natural follow-up to "Picking Apples From the Tree" on page 24, and it can be done individually or with partners. If the group is large, use partners.

Hurry, little Johnny,
Come along with me.
Come into my garden and
Shake my apple tree.

The children skip, all in the same direction, around the outside of the room until the end of the first stanza.

I will shake the big ones,
You will shake the small.

Stand with one foot in front of the other, so that you have a strong stance from which to shake the apple tree. Arms and bodies lean forward and back to shake the tree really hard. Partners can shake the same tree.

When we fill our baskets,

Curve one arm so that it makes a basket and hold it still. Bend and pick up apples with the other hand, stand and put them into the basket. Repeat this movement once or twice.

Home we'll take them all,
Home we'll take them all.

Holding the basket carefully, since it is now full of apples, skip with it to the piano, or to whatever place you have designated as the apple barrel. Everyone empties the contents of their baskets carefully into the barrel. Then ask the children to sit down and tell you all the things that they can make out of apples, like apple pie, apple juice, jelly apples, apple cider, apple cake, and they'll come up with others you'd never think of. Some will even say pineapple juice, and this is a good time to discuss what comes from what, a subject that needs some clarification.

Now that you have talked about the things you can make out of apples, you really don't think you have enough apples for all that, so you'd better pick some more, and the song starts again.



Shake the apple tree really hard. When partners do it together, they face each other and one shakes forward while the other shakes back.

CLAP YOUR HANDS

Number of players: 3 or more



CLAP YOUR HA

Number of players: 1 or more

This lively song is based on the old American folk tune, "Old Joe Clark."

Gather the children around you at the piano and tell them to open up their ears and get ready to listen very hard. You are going to tell them to do different things, and the first thing you will tell them to do is to clap their hands, which they will do and sing with you.

Clap clap clap your hands,
Clap your hands together.
Clap clap clap your hands,
Clap your hands together.

Now explain that the next part of the music is dancing music, and you want them to get up on their toes, stretch out their arms, and show you how very marvelously they can dance. Play the second part of the music.

When the music ends, tell the children to get their shovels ready, because they are going to dig in the ground.

Dig dig dig the ground,
Dig the ground together.
Dig dig dig the ground,
Dig the ground together.

Play the dancing music again. The children already know what to do when they dance. Encourage them to use all the different parts of their bodies—their fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, heads, toes, knees, ankles, hips, backs, chests.

Now the
on page 30).

Jun
Jump
Jump
Jump u

Play the dancing music

Tell the children to point up at the moon —to lift their heads way up can see the moon— and to walk and turn and point to the moon as you all sing:

See see see the moon,
See the moon together.
See see see the moon,
See the moon together.

Now ask the children to get their feet ready and to make lots of noise as they stamp:

Stamp stamp stamp your feet,
Stamp your feet together.
Stamp stamp stamp your feet,
Stamp your feet together.

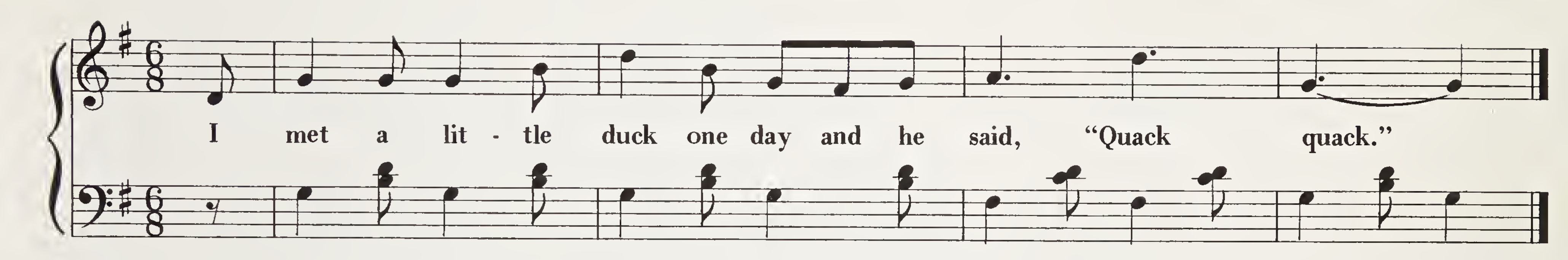
Play the dancing music for the last time and ask the children to dance as marvelously as they can. If there is enough space and few enough children, they can even dance with their eyes closed.



"Jump jump jump up high" from "Clap Your Hands" on page 28. A teacher is leading this dance in groups. Each child is jumping in his or her own way. The girls on either end, Christina and Fifi, are looking up as they jump, which lifts them higher into the air and makes them enjoy the jump more. The children in the back are waiting for their turn.

I MET A LITTLE DUCK

Number of players: 1 or more



I met a little duck one day
And he said, "Quack, quack."

I said, "Will you come home with me?"
But he said, "Quack, quack."

I said, "Do you swim around all day?"
And he said, "Quack, quack."

I said, "Will you come to school with me?"
But he said, "Quack, quack."

I said, "Do you have baby ducks?"
And he said, "Quack, quack."

I said, "Are you a friend of mine?"
And he said, "Quack, quack."

In this question-and-answer song, the children shake their heads up and down to mean "Yes" or from side to side to mean "No." The lines that start with the word "But" are "No" answers, and the others are "Yes" answers.

When you finish with the questions here, ask the children to make up their own. Explain that it must be a question that can be answered with either "Yes" or "No." Younger children may need a bit of help to formulate their questions to fit into the song structure. Ask questions about family life, about what they eat, and where they live.

When you have exhausted the question of ducks, go on to other animals. You can meet a pig, or a bird, or even a man, and you will have an unending song.

A DUCK CAN DIVE

Number of players: 2 or more



Once you're talking about ducks, you can go on to this easy little song. You can learn the movements for it in a few minutes. The only part you need to practice beforehand is the duck waddle in the last two lines. Squat with your feet about 12 inches (30 cm.) apart and your bottom almost on the floor. Keep your body erect, bend your elbows, and hold your hands up palms out. Now walk and you'll find yourself waddling from side to side.

A duck can dive

Get ready to dive by putting your arms close together straight out in front of you. No one will actually "dive" into the water until you say the word "dive," so to make it more dramatic, stretch out the first three words. You can make it more exciting by adding things like, "A duck can—sometimes he can—sometimes he can't—but now he really and truly can—" so that no one knows when the word "dive" is going to come. When it does come, the children jump (into the water) and end up flat on their bellies.

And he can swim,

Everyone swims. With older children you might discuss how a duck really swims—by paddling along—and see if they can do just that.

But when he walks
I laugh at him!

Now you have a chance to do your waddle walk. It is quite tiring, especially for big people, so let the children do it by themselves, right over to you.

Save the dramatic way of doing it for the second go-through; do it simply as it is written the first time.



The waddle walk: Andrew (center) and Jennifer (right foreground) are doing it just right. Notice how close to the floor their bottoms are. You can actually feel Andrew's waddle.



Practice the arm motions before you start moving. Hands should be stiff. Three-year-old Sandra (in the plaid pants) has the feel of it very well, but needs to tighten up her right hand.

INDIAN DRUMMER BOY

Number of players: 2 or more



This simple rhythm game gives children a chance to be Indians and drummers at the same time. The name "Koko Momomo" (pronounced Moe-moe-moe) is unusual, so practice it with the children a few times until they can say it easily.

I am an Indian drummer boy.
My name is Koko Momomo.

Stand on your toes, arms bent and crossed in front of you at shoulder height, and walk single file on tall stiff legs.

I play my drum trum trum trum trum

Come down from your toes and stand in place, using your arms like cymbals, stretched out in front of you. Move them up and down, slapping each other loudly as they pass.

INDIAN DRUMMER BOY

And tap time with my toe toe toe.

Standing where you are, tap your toe with an outstretched leg, as the song suggests.

If you are playing a piano, call 4 children at a time and give them each a specific note to play along with you. Give two of them notes below you in the bass, one an E and one a B. Give the other two children notes above where you are playing—one a G and one a B. Tell them to watch you and to play when you do, so that you can all play in time together. They get a splendid feeling of accomplishment from accompanying you on the piano.

If you have a drum or any other percussive instrument, select a drummer who will follow the rhythmic line shown directly under the piano score. It is a simple line of walk—walk—run-run—walk, and it continues throughout the song. Practice it with the children who are helping you at the piano so that they can play their notes in the same rhythm. The rest of the children can help by clapping the rhythm with you, the drummer, and the piano accompanists.

INDIAN RHYTHM

If you want to use the song as a rhythm exercise for older children, divide the group in half. Use whatever percussive instruments are available, clap, or beat the rhythm on the floor with your hands or feet. One group beats the following rhythm:

walk—walk—run-run—walk

while the other group beats:

run-run—walk—walk—walk

You play the music at the same time.

DOG THROUGH THE HOOP

Number of players: 1 - 12

This circus game establishes a nice rapport and it is a good change from group games.

You are the circus ringmaster, and the children are performing poodles. Hold a hoop on end so that the bottom of it rests on the floor. Now call each poodle separately (only one poodle can fit through the hoop at a time). As you call, each poodle runs to the hoop on 4 legs—using 2 hands and 2 feet, not on their knees—since dogs always walk on their feet.

When they get to the hoop, they stop, collect themselves, and jump through, again landing on 4 legs.

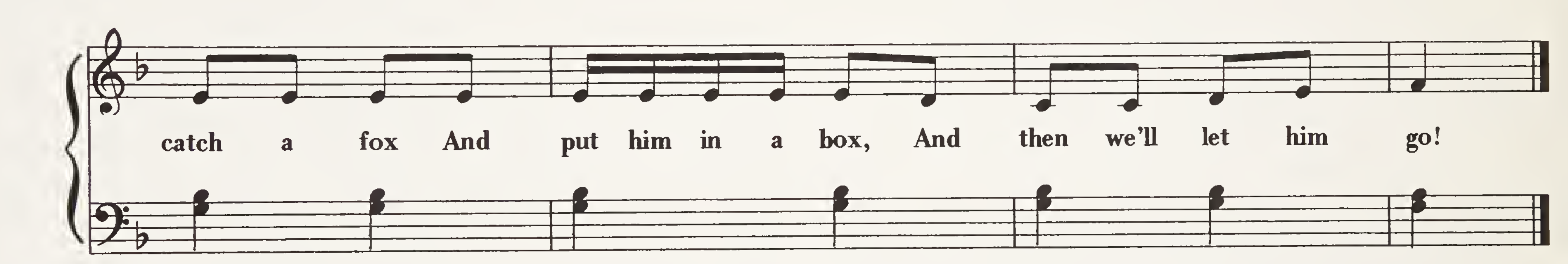
After the poodles jump through, pat them on the head, and they wag their tails, shaking them from side to side. When each poodle finishes wagging, he or she runs back to the starting place, still on 4 legs, as you call another poodle by name and the sequence continues.

This game is best to use with a small group. If your group is larger (more than 12), ask the next poodle to start when the first one is jumping through the hoop. This keeps the action flowing.

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO

Number of players: 1 or more





Oh, a-hunting we will go,
A-hunting we will go,
We'll catch a fox
And put him in a box,
And then we'll let him go!

This song is excellent for galloping or skipping. You can do it singly, with partners, or in groups of three or more, moving in a line, a circle, or just freely around the room. It's a good walking song, too, no matter where you are, and it's fun to invent new verses for it. Here are some possibilities:

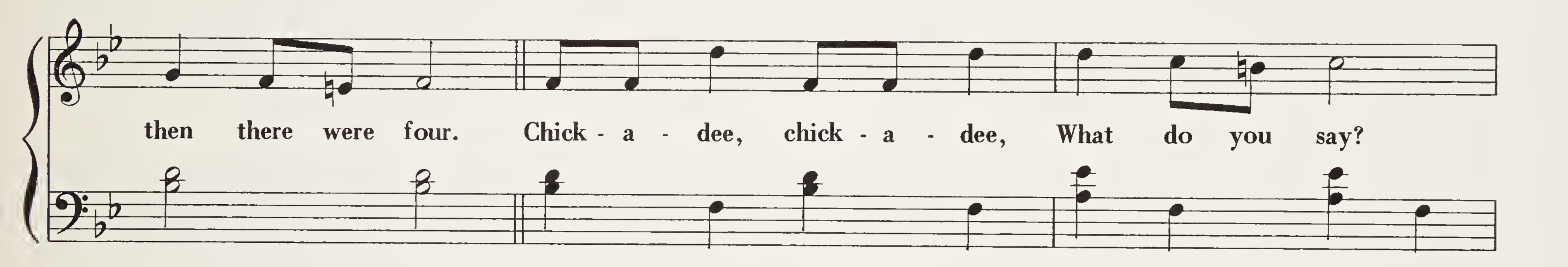
We'll catch a fish and put him in a dish
We'll catch a bear and sit him on a chair
We'll catch a horse and ride him of course
We'll catch a snake and give him a shake
We'll catch a pig and dance him a jig
We'll catch a mouse and put him in a house
We'll catch a cat and put him in a hat
We'll catch a chicken and give him a lickin'

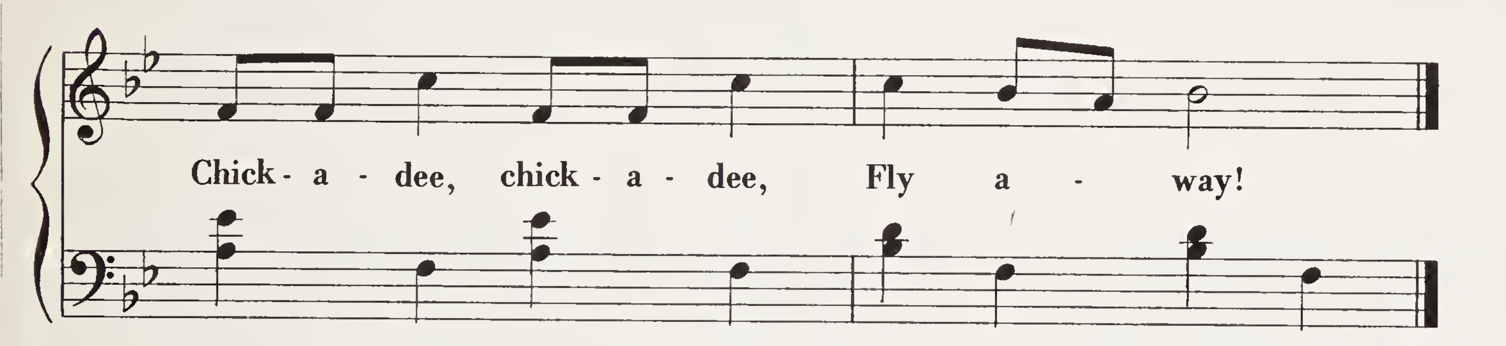
You needn't stop with just singing these funny verses. Introduce movement by asking the children to be the animals: fish swim around the dish (it is small, so don't swim too far). Bears walk in a clumsy way (legs far apart). Horses gallop away. To be a snake, lie down on the ground and try to shake all over; it isn't easy. Invent your own jig by hopping or skipping from one foot to the other with hands on hips. Point your toe or step on the heel as you "jig." The little mouse just curls up and lies still. The cat jumps into the hat. On the last line, choose one child to be the chicken and chase him or her—but no touching!

FIVE LITTLE CHICKADEES

Number of players: 5 or more







There is something sweet, soft and magical about this song. Sing it tenderly.

The children sing with you as they sit together on the floor near the piano. If you're playing a guitar or autoharp, just gather them around.

Five little chickadees,
Sitting on the floor,
One flew away
And then there were four.

FIVE LITTLE CHICKADEES

Before the chorus starts for the first time, choose some children to fly away, as you all sing. The children fly together, lifting their wings way up and down and running gently on their toes around the room to a designated corner. Here they sit and wait for the other chickadees.

Chorus: **Chickadee, chickadee,**
What do you say?
Chickadee, chickadee,
Fly away!

After singing the next stanza, choose a few more children and as you sing the chorus again, they fly and land with the other chickadees in the corner.

Four little chickadees,
Sitting in a tree,
One flew away
And then there were three.

Repeat the process until all the children have had a chance to fly away. When all the chickadees are sitting together in the corner, tell them they can all have a turn to fly together, and then return to you. Sing one more chorus for that.

Chorus

Three little chickadees,
Looking at you,
One flew away
And then there were two.

Chorus

Two little chickadees,
Sitting in the sun,
One flew away
And then there was one.

Chorus

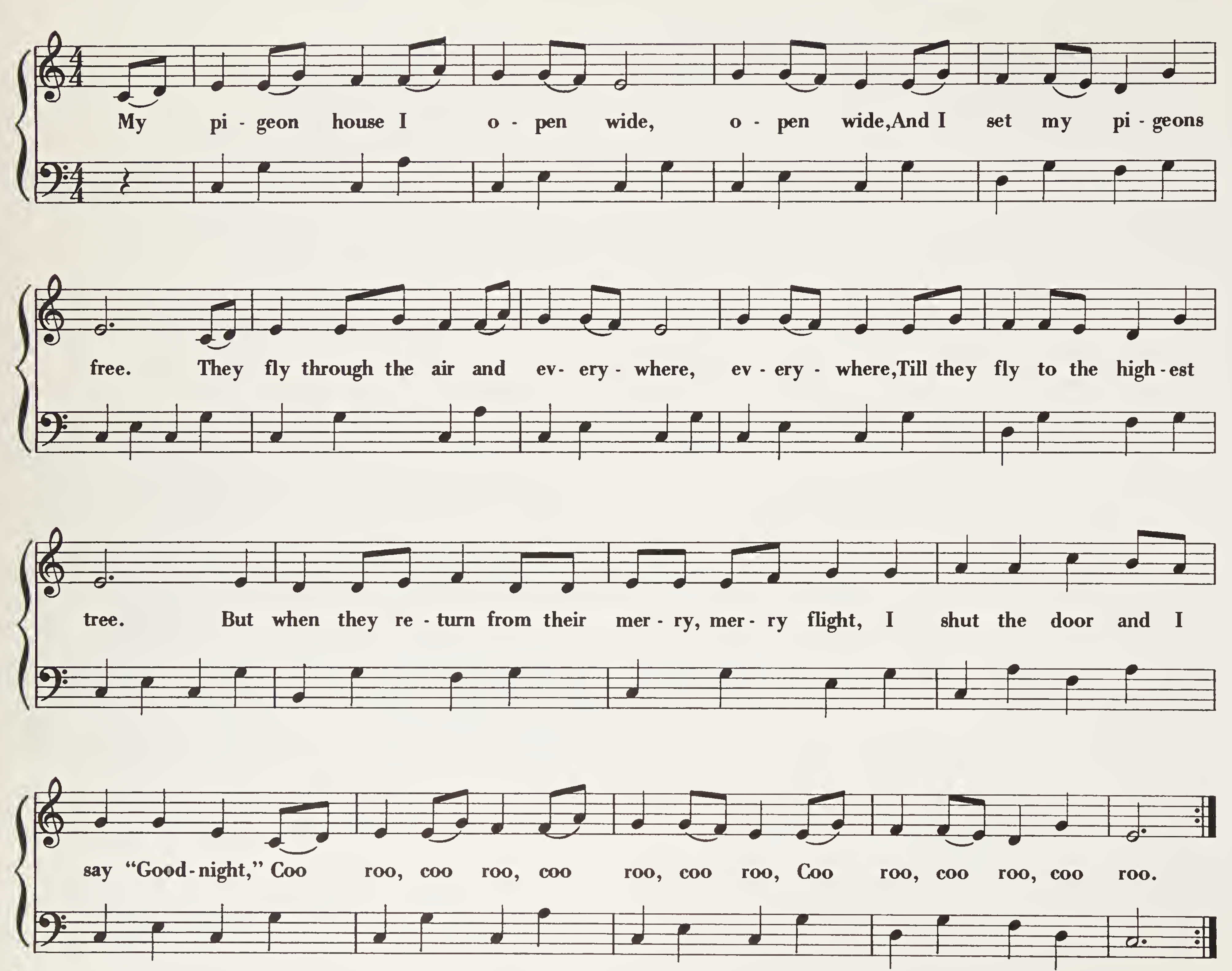
One little chickadee,
Sitting all alone,
He flew away
And then there were none.

Chorus

Subtracting one chickadee each time is a good way to teach number concepts. You might ask the children, "If you have four chickadees and one flies away, how many are left?" You can ask the children to count the chickadees themselves, just to be sure you didn't make a mistake. But otherwise, don't try to make the numbers come out right when you choose the chickadees to fly. If the group is large (20 or more), send about one-fifth of the children out each time. If there are fewer children, you might even work it out so that when you say "three little chickadees" you only have three sitting there. But it doesn't matter; it works fine either way.

MY PIGEON HOUSE

Number of players: 4 or more



MY PIGEON HOUSE

This story is self-explanatory; the music is based on the German folk tune, "Muss I' Denn."

My pigeon house I open wide, open wide,

The children sit close together in the corner in the pigeon house, with their feathers almost touching. On the first line, you go to the pigeon house and make believe you're opening the door.

And I set my pigeons free.
They fly through the air and everywhere, everywhere,
Till they fly to the highest tree.

On these lines, the pigeons fly out into the room on their toes, moving their wings up and down. If the group is small they can fly freely anywhere they want, but if it is large, it is best to have them all fly in the same direction to avoid bumping.

But when they return from their merry, merry flight,
I shut the door and I say, "Good night."
Coo roo, coo roo, coo roo, coo roo,
Coo roo, coo roo, coo roo.

In this stanza, the pigeons return to their house, curl up, tuck their heads under their wings, and go to sleep, while everyone sings the pigeon sounds of "coo roo."

CATCH A STAR AND PUT IT IN YOUR POCKET

Number of players: 2 or more

This game gives children a sense of immediate accomplishment, even though they may know very well that stars are not for catching.

Form a circle with the children, and stand with your feet about 12 inches (30 cm.) apart to give you a good strong base. Stretch both arms straight up in the air and look at the sky. Now reach up with one arm after the other (don't bend your elbows) while you say, "Reach and reach, and reach and reach, and reach and jump up and catch a star!" Then jump as you reach and say, "I got it!" All the children, unsolicited, will repeat after you, "I got it!" Then say, while you and the children do the movements:

Stick out your hip—
Put the star in your pocket.
Close the pocket
And lock it! (cluck with your tongue)

Now you want to catch a star for the other pocket, so repeat the sequence, but this time, stick out the other hip. Perhaps the children will tell you that they have pockets in the front of their blouse, or in the back of their pants, and that's all right, but whichever part has the pocket is the part to stick out. If everyone's energy is still high, catch two more stars for front or back pockets, moving your hips forward or back.

This is just a start. The next time you do this with the group, reach for a planet. You can catch a comet and have trouble stuffing the whole thing into your pocket. You can catch the tail of a kite and fly away with it. What else can you do? Ask the children for ideas.

WE SAIL AND WE SAIL AND WE STOP!

Number of players: 3 or more



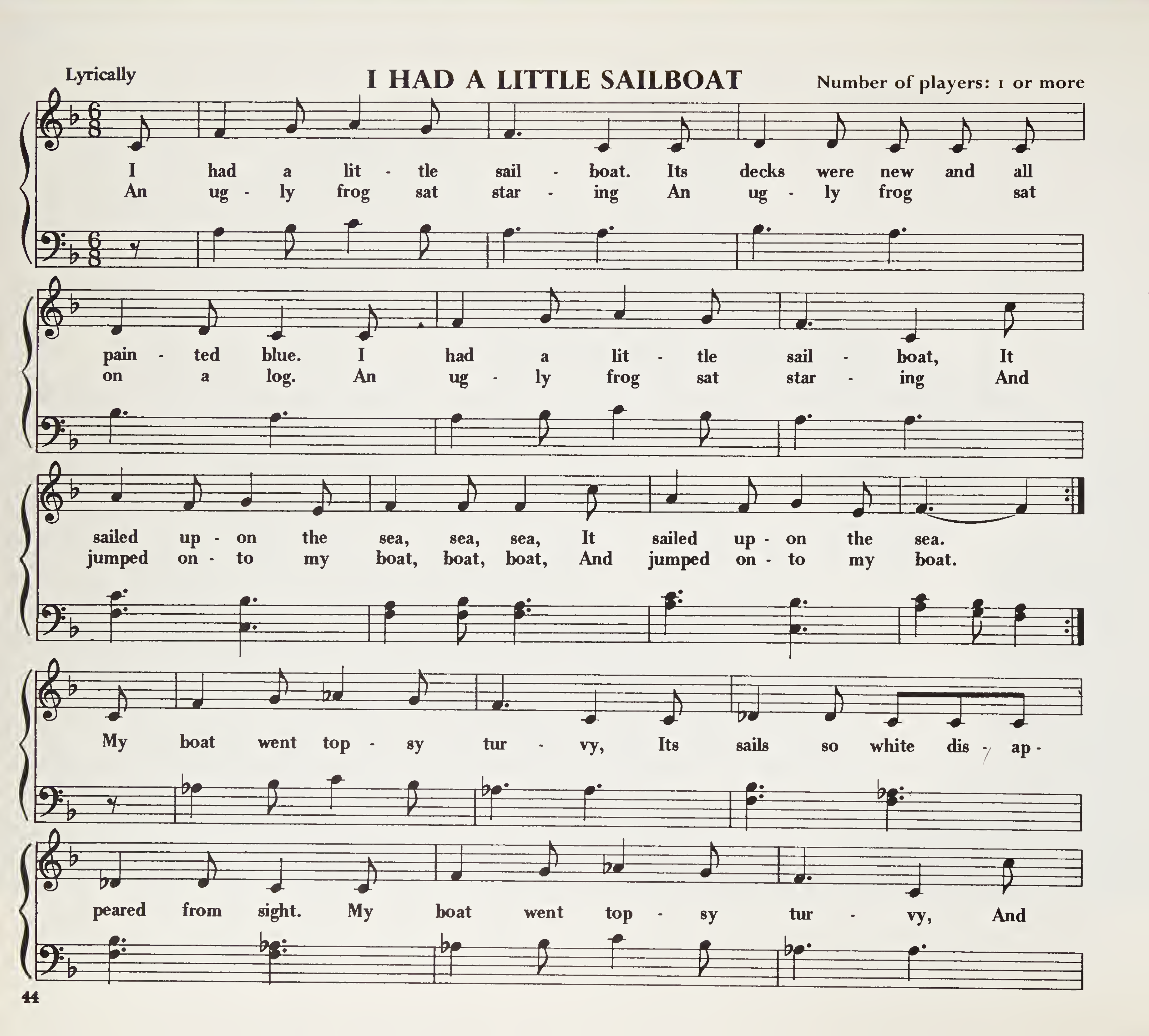
We sail and we sail and we stop!
We sail and we sail and we stop!
We sail and we sail and we sail and we sail
And we sail and we sail and we stop!

This song is good to use when spring and summer approach. The children are the sailboats. The feeling is light, as if the sails are floating in the air.

Sit on the floor in a circle with the soles of your feet together, touching each other, and your knees almost down to the ground (with young children whose bodies are very flexible, they may easily be *on* the ground). Your arms—the sails of the boat—stretch out to either side. Keep your body very tall and uplifted. Each time you sing, "sail," lean your whole body to the side (head included), and put one hand on the floor, while the other hand (sail) soars up in the air. Look at the lifted hand as you lean over. Now lean to the other side and do the same thing. On the word "stop," freeze in the last movement. Continue with the sailing movements when the song continues. Imagine your sails catching the wind gently. At the very last "stop," the song ends. Once through is enough; next time you can go sailing again.

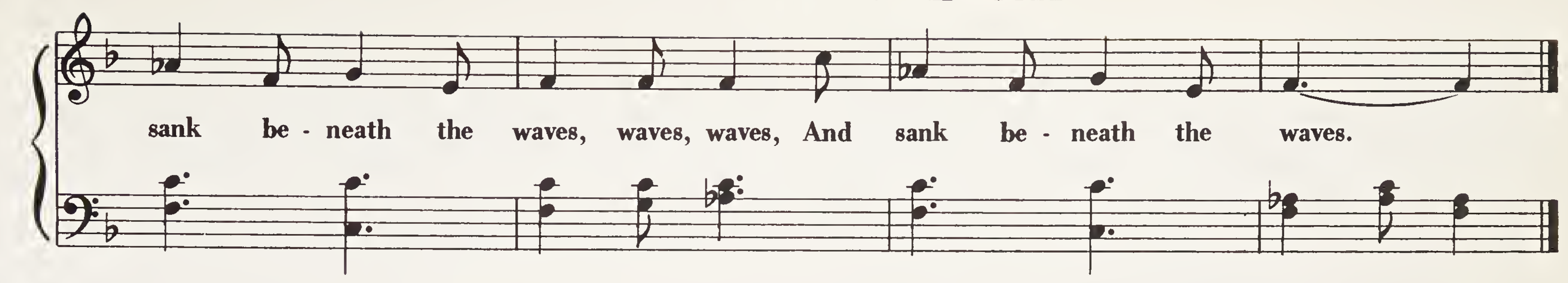


"We sail": James, on the left, has a wonderful intensity and strength in his movements. His left hand is all the way behind him, though, instead of to the side, and this makes it difficult for him to lean way over as he sails. The soles of his feet should be touching instead of crossed, and that will allow him more movement, too.



Lyrically
I HAD A LITTLE SAILBOAT
Number of players: 1 or more
I had a lit - tle sail - boat. Its decks were new and all
An ug - ly frog sat star - ing An ug - ly frog sat
pain - ted blue. I had a lit - tle sail - boat, It
on a log. An ug - ly frog sat star - ing And
sailed up - on the sea, sea, sea, It sailed up - on the sea.
jumped on - to my boat, boat, boat, And jumped on - to my boat.
My boat went top - sy tur - vy, Its sails so white dis - ap -
peared from sight. My boat went top - sy tur - vy, And

I HAD A LITTLE SAILBOAT



I had a little sailboat.
Its decks were new and all painted blue.
I had a little sailboat,
It sailed upon the sea, sea, sea,
It sailed upon the sea.

An ugly frog sat staring.
An ugly frog sat on a log.
An ugly frog sat staring,
And jumped onto my boat, boat, boat,
And jumped onto my boat.

My boat went topsy turvy.
Its sails so white disappeared from sight.
My boat went topsy turvy,
And sank beneath the waves, waves, waves,
And sank beneath the waves.

This dramatic song, to the tune of "Il Etait Une Bergère," makes a quietly exciting story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Explain that the room is a lake and that the story is about a toy sailboat that goes sailing on it.

The children all stand together at the boat dock (at one side of the room). They will be the sailboats. They lift their sails (arms) out to the side. The wind sets them sailing and as they sail they sing the first verse. The sailing movement is a gentle one: they take small steps along the outside of the room, leaning their entire bodies (heads and arms, too) first to one side and then to the other.

At the start of the second verse, the children gather in the middle of the room and squat with their hands on the floor between their legs. Now they are frogs that are all ready to jump. Explain what the word "stare" means, and go around the room and stare at each child separately, saying, "Now I am staring at Stephen. Now I am staring at Joanie." Then ask the children to stare at each other, as you sing the first three lines of the second stanza. Each time you say the word "jump," all the frogs jump in place, landing where they started.

Now remind them that they are toy sailboats again. Ask them what happens to a toy sailboat when a great big frog jumps on it. They will know the answer: that it sinks lower and lower until it disappears beneath the water. As they sail and sing the last stanza, their arms touch the water (the floor), as they lean from side to side (this is the topsy turvy movement). On the last two lines, they get lower and lower, sinking to their knees (still leaning from side to side), until they get way down on the floor and curl up under the water. Try to catch each child's eye as they sink. Each one smiles at you secretly, and it is a nice moment.

THIS OLD MAN

Number of players: 3 or more

A rollicking song that is great for singing, this old favorite is even better when you put actions along with it. To make it really exciting and unique, this version experiments with changes of tempo, as well.



THIS OLD MAN

This old man, he plays one,
He plays nickanacka on his thumb,

Sing the first two lines straight.

With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,

Slap one thumb against the other.

This old man came rolling home.

Bend your arms and hold them parallel to each other in front of you at shoulder height, keeping them stiff from elbow to fingers. Revolve your forearms around each other in a rolling movement. Keep this winding movement going until the end of the line.

This old man, he plays two,
He plays nickanacka on his shoe,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old man came rolling home.

The format is the same, but on the third line you tap your finger against your shoe all through the line.

This old man, he plays three,
He plays nickanacka on his knee,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old man came rolling home.

On line 3 you slap your knee first with one hand and then the other throughout the line.

By this time the children know what to expect and which movements come after which, so this is the time to change it and make it more difficult and more interesting. Tell the children that they have to watch you and listen very carefully, because you are going to change the last line every time from now on. Sometimes it will be slow, sometimes fast, and sometimes fast and slow. It will be a surprise each time you sing it.

This old man, he plays four,
He plays nickanacka on the floor,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old man came rolling-home.

On line 3, slap the floor with your palms in double-time, and sing the entire last line very slowly—really drag it out—until the last word "home," which you speed up and say very abruptly. This will catch the children's attention, and they will watch carefully next time.

This old man, he plays five,
He plays nickanacka on his side,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This-old-man came rolling home.

On line 3 slap your right side with both hands. Start the last line fast and then slow up for the last 3 words.

This old man, he plays six,
He plays nickanacka on his sticks,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old man came-rolling-home.

On line 3, slap your index fingers together. On the last line, start slow and speed up on the last 3 words.

This old man, he plays seven,
He plays nickanacka up in heaven,

THIS OLD MAN

With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This-old-man-came-rolling home.

On line 3 point up in the air, bending and stretching your arm with each point. The last line is fast until the last word.

This old man, he plays eight,
He plays nickanacka on the gate,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This-old-man-came-rolling-home.

On line 3, stretch both arms in front of you with fingers spread apart. Bend and stretch your elbows, as if swinging on a gate. The last line is all fast.

This old man, he plays nine,
He plays nickanacka all the time,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old man came rolling home.

On line 3 clap hands throughout the line. The last line is all slow.

This old man, he plays ten,
He plays nickanacka over again,
With a nickanacka pollywacka, give a dog a bone,
This old-man came rolling-home.

On line 3 do any movement you want. On the last line, alternate rhythm, as shown.

I AM A LITTLE BUSY BEE

Number of players: 4 or more

I am a little busy bee,
Buzzing in the clover.
Here I go, there I go,
All the wide world over.
Buzzzzzz, buzzzzzz, buzzzzzzz!

Your voice is the music in this poem with movement. Use it dramatically. Besides being fun, this game builds strong stomach muscles, and it gives arms and legs a real workout.

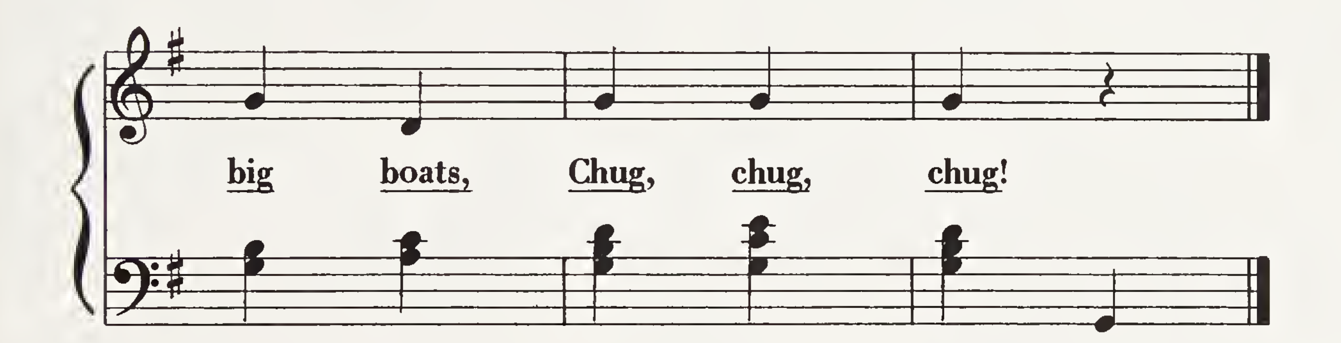
The children form a circle and lie down on their backs with their feet facing the center of it. Their arms should stretch out stiff and straight in front, with hands on their thighs.

You are the bee. As you say the first four lines of the poem, fly around the circle, darting between the children (the clover). As you say each "buzzzzzz," touch one of the children on the belly. Say as many buzzzzzz's as there are children. When the children are touched, each one lifts his or her head and legs off the ground and quickly kicks arms and legs with stiff motions, up and down, up and down, as if trying to get rid of the bee. Their knees and elbows should be straight and stiff the entire time. The movement is tiring if done right, so ask the children to stop when they want, especially if the group is large and it takes time to go from one to the next. As a finale, say the poem once more and then, with one "buzzzzzzzzz," tell the children to imagine that you are landing on all their bellies at the same moment—and *really* tickling them—and they all try to shake you off at the same time.

CHUG, CHUG, CHUG

Number of players: 2 or more





Chug, chug, chug, __
I'm a little tug. __
I pull the big boats,
Chug, chug, chug! __

Explain that a tugboat is special because it is a small boat but a very strong one—so strong that it can pull big ocean liners in and out of port.

First just sing the song to the children while they sit around the piano. The second time through, the children sing it with you until they learn it. As you all sing it a third time, the children practice the arm movements, which simulate the pulling motion of the tugboat.

To do the arm movements: extend one arm straight in front of you at shoulder level, palms facing inward, fingers pointing forward. The other arm is pulled back, leading with the elbow, with fist clenched. You create the pulling action by changing arms on each underscored word with a strong, quick motion. Then hold that position for a couple of seconds before changing arms again.

Please note the extra underscores on lines 1, 2, and 4. The chugging is a steady rhythm, and though the words stop while you take a breath, the chugging continues without a break.

Once the children have the feel of the arm movements, the tugboats are ready to go. Stand and continue the arm motion, but now every time you change arms, step forward, lifting your knees with big strong steps.



"Chug chug chug": This bridge (Erick), is tall and strong, with arms and legs stretched perfectly. Erick wanted to be such a tall bridge, he even went up on his toes, which helps. This boat is travelling through with ease. If a bridge is too low and a boat is too high, you can have real navigational problems.

CHUG, CHUG, CHUG

Don't aim to cover much space. Aim for lifting the knees high with each step: think high instead of forward as the tug goes slowly.

The tugboats travel around the outside of the room in a circle, so that the boats don't collide. When you have gone through the stanza with both arm and leg movements, choose two or three children to be bridges. The number of bridges you need depends on the size of the group. If it is large, add a few more bridges. Scatter them around the edge of the room; children tend to station bridges right next to each other—it seems to give them a feeling of security—but it is not at all necessary. In fact, if the bridges are spread apart, the boats cover a greater area and do more work and it makes for a better game.

The bridges bend forward and put their hands on the floor. Hands should be near each other and feet should be fairly close together, too, but keep enough space between the hands and feet for boats to get through. If arms and legs are too far apart, the bridge is too low. The closer they are to each other, and the higher the child's bottom, the higher the bridge.

As the children who are still tugboats come to a bridge, they bend low and go under it. They will probably have to crawl through on their bellies. When each child has had a turn going under the bridges, sing the song again with all the children as tugboats. Then choose new bridges and start over.

BASKETS

Number of players: 1 or more

Most children's bodies are marvelously flexible, and they can twist them into many shapes. One of these is the "basket," a quick interesting way to do a fine all-over stretch.

Ask the children to form a circle, lying on their bellies with their heads toward the center of it and their arms by their sides. They bend their knees up behind them, stretch their arms back and grasp their ankles. At your signal, they lift their heads and chests as high as they can and their bodies form a basket.

Walk up behind each child individually and ask him or her to lift up and look back at you. This brings their heads way back and accentuates the lift. Then place your hands on the front of their upper arms and gently help them to lift even more.

While they are stretching, ask what they have in their baskets that is good to eat. One day ask for the name of a fruit or vegetable; in the spring you might ask for a flower, or in the autumn a leaf. When you have made the rounds and visited each child, ask them to be baskets all at the same time. Say something like, "Stretch your basket upupupupupup—hold it a minute—and now put your head down and take a rest."

FLYING HORSES

Number of players: 4 or more



It is marvelously exhilarating to be a flying horse. It gives children such a sense of self and of their own power that sometimes, watching them, you really feel that they can stay up in the air.

In order for a horse to fly and cut the air with its movement, it gallops at the same time as it makes huge circles with its arms. Start with your arms at your sides; then bring them up in front of you, lifting them high, and bring them down in the back. Once you master this coordination, you never forget it. And you will never see a flying horse that isn't smiling!

As many as 10 children can fly around the room at the same time, or the group can sit in a circle while just 3 or 4 horses fly around the outside of it. If you choose the circle method, finish the music when the horses have flown around twice. Then the players in the circle hug their knees and close their eyes. The flying horses tiptoe around the outside of the circle and each one taps a different child gently on the top of the head. As that child gets up, the flying horse sits in his or her place. Ask all the sitting children to open their eyes to see the new flying horses, and the game starts again. Tell the flying horses to lift their heads as well as their knees when they gallop. Repeat the sequence until everyone has had a turn.

PROUD PONIES

Number of players: 4 or more



Once the children have mastered the flying horse co-ordination, they are ready to be proud ponies, which are quite different, but just as much fun. The feeling of these ponies is one of elegance and self-containment. They are almost a bit arrogant. The reason they are so proud is that they are beautiful circus ponies, and they have glittering headdresses made of many different-colored feathers.

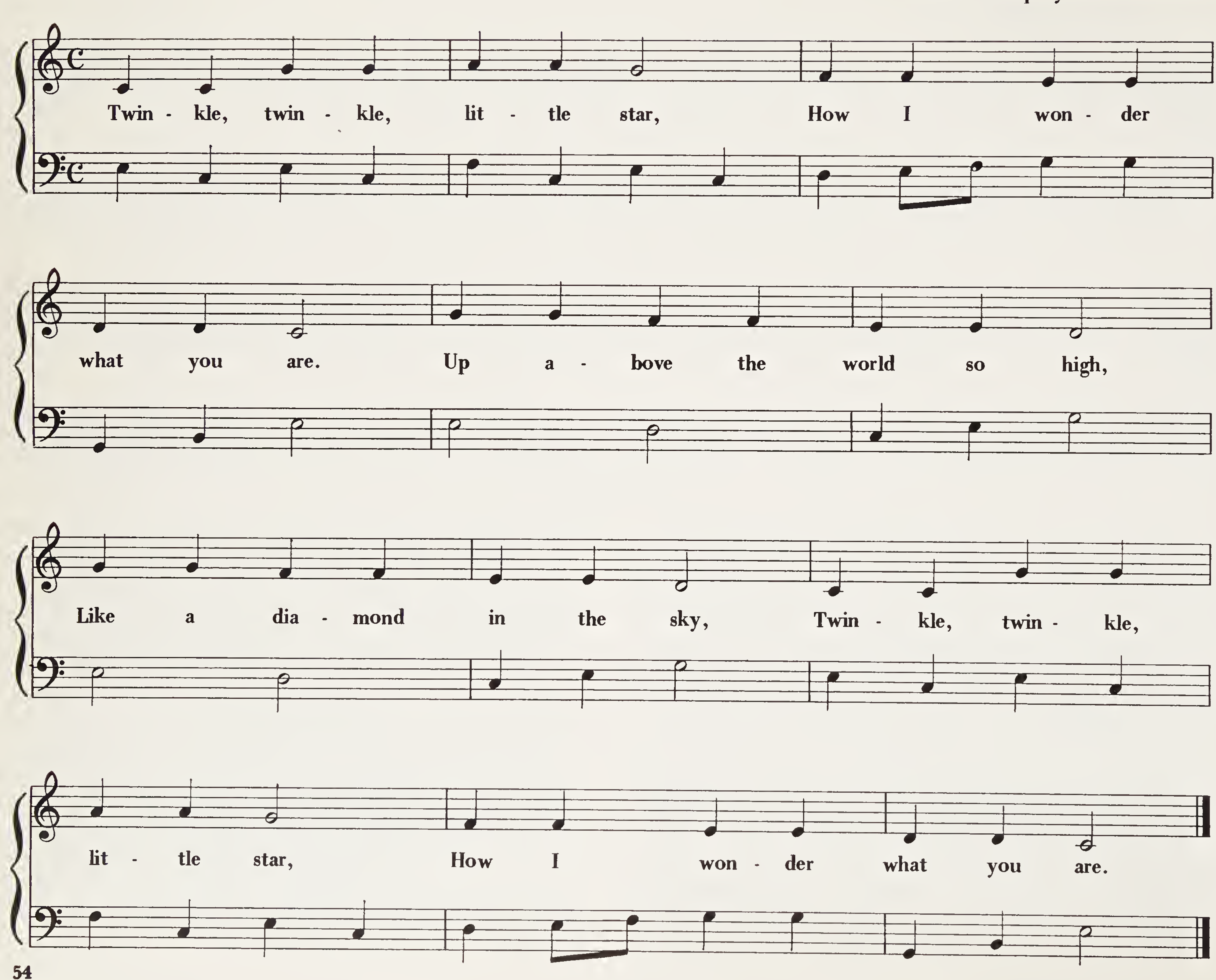
Ponies put their hands on their hips, very tall and proud and prance by lifting their knees high in front of them as they shake their heads from side to side to show off the feathers. A prance is a run with lifted knees that can be done in place, so impress upon the ponies that though they lift their knees high, they don't cover much territory; otherwise, they will run fast and not prance. They can prance all together in a circle or in formation—rows of twos or threes or fours—depending on the size of the group. Or you can use the same circle pattern as for Flying Horses, with the proud ponies tapping new children each time until everyone has had a turn.

CAROUSEL

Put proud ponies and flying horses together in a circle and you have a carousel. Set up alternating rows of ponies and horses with at least three of each type in a row; it is easier for the children to stick to their own movement if other children close by are doing the same thing. Use either piece of music or authentic carousel music, if you can find it.

TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR

Number of players: 2 or more



TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.

Many of the children in any group will know this old favorite, and that makes it a particularly good springboard for experimenting with the qualities of different sounds and relating movement to them.

After you sing the song through and the children are sure of all the words, sing all the lines softly except the lines, "How I wonder what you are." Sing them very loud.

Now wiggle your fingers and circle with your arms at the same time for the soft parts, while you clap hard and strong on the loud parts.

Next, divide the group in two. One group is "soft" and the other is "loud." You be the conductor and tell each group when to sing its part. Be sure to change parts so that each group has a turn being both "soft" and "loud."

When the children have absorbed this, do the same thing in movement. Draw an imaginary line across half the room and send each group to its own side of the line. They can move only on that side and only on their line of the music. The "soft" group moves on its toes with gentle movements, while the "loud" group moves big and strong, with twisting jumps and turns and sharp movements. When each group finishes its part, it freezes in the last movement and remains, statue-like, until its next turn.

RUBBER BANDS

Number of players: 1 or more

Let's be rubber bands,
Stretch our legs and arms and hands,
Keep on stretching until we hear this sound—
. . . .
Then snap right down to the floor or ground.
Curl right up when you touch the floor
And stretch until you hear this sound
. . . . once more.

As you can tell from the poem, this game needs some kind of strong, loud sound where the dots appear, something like a drum or a gong or a wood block or a spoon in a pot; use your imagination and you'll come up with an interesting sound.

The children start off curled up like small rubber bands on the floor. When they start to stretch, they get bigger and bigger until they are up on their feet with arms and legs extended in any shape they want. They can stay on their knees, stretch on the floor, or up in the air—if they prefer. They hold that extreme position until you play the sound. Then they pop back to being small rubber bands curled up on the floor, and the game starts again.

If you don't have anything at hand for creating the sound, give the children 4 counts to stretch to the biggest rubber bands they can be. Count to 4 slowly and draw out the word "FOUR" as they hold their stretched-out position. Then you all say "POP!" and "POP" they fall down, clapping their hands loudly, and curl up, ready to stretch again.

PETER PETER PENGUIN

Number of players: 3 or more



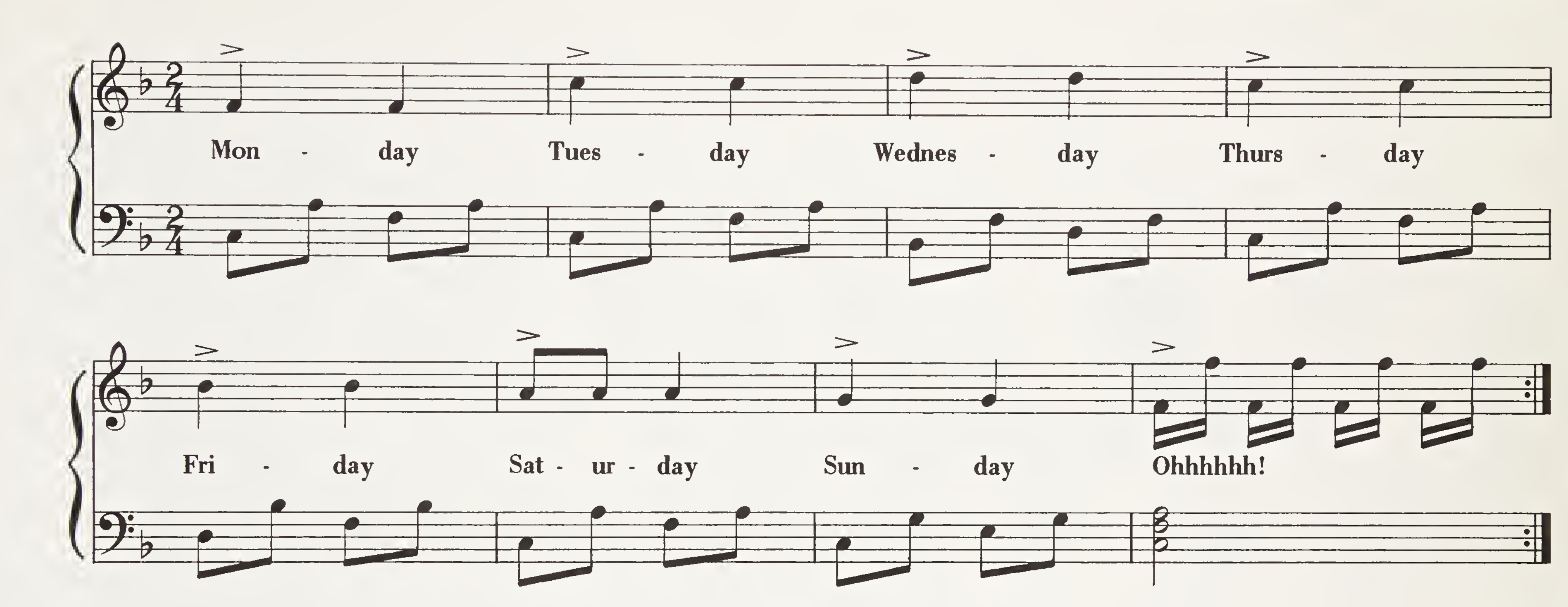
Peter Peter Penguin, marching by,
Toes turned out and head held high,
Long black coat and a clean white vest,
Peter Peter Penguin, you're the best!

You can use this delightful walking song to move from one room to another or from one activity to another. It also brings up lots of discussion about penguins: what they look like, where they live, how they move, and it gives the children a chance to experiment with an entirely new coordination.

The children stand very tall and stiff, with heads held high and toes turned out. Their arms are flat against their bodies, with their wrists bent out at a 45° angle. The penguins walk slowly, leaning their bodies in one straight piece from side to side. This really gives the feeling of being a stiff penguin. Once the children master the movements, choose one to be mother penguin and one to be father penguin. The rest are baby penguins. The mother and father walk in front and the babies follow as you all sing the song.

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY

Number of players: 1 or more



Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday
Friday Saturday Sunday—Ohhhhhh!

This easy little exercise is useful for learning the days of the week as well as stretching legs and backs and gaining flexibility.

Ask the children to sit at the piano with space between them—or in a circle—and to spread their legs as wide apart as they can.

Now they lift their arms straight up to the sky, really stretching up, and then turn their bodies toward their left legs and hold onto their knee, ankle or toes, whichever they can grasp most easily. Young children's bodies are usually quite flexible, and chances are that they can reach fairly far down on their legs.

As they sing, each time they say a day of the week, they bend their elbows, still holding onto a part of the leg, and pull their heads down toward their knees. On the word "Ohhhhhh," they lift their bodies up, reach with their arms to the sky, elbows straight, and shake their wrists from side to side. They shake them as fast as they can while they sing the "Ohhhhhh!"—which is not a harmonious note but a loud high sound, shrill and mysterious. Now repeat the basic leg-reaching movement on the other side, with hands reaching toward the right ankle.



The author leads this 3- to 5-year-old train. Notice how close together her feet are. The "engineer" needs to take small steps, because the children's legs are much smaller and it is hard for them to keep up. Already, this train is dangerously close to breaking apart.

TRAIN IS A-COMIN'

Number of players: 5 or more





Train is a-comin'—oh yes—___
Train is a-comin'—oh yes—___
Train is a-comin'—train is a-comin'—
Train is a-comin'—oh yes! ___

Better get your ticket—oh yes—___
Better get your ticket—oh yes—___
Better get your ticket—better get your ticket—
Better get your ticket—oh yes! ___

Songs about trains are perennial favorites with children and this spiritual is one of the best of them. Everyone is equally important on this train, and each child must do his or her part to keep the train running well and on the track. As with all trains, it needs a conductor—an engineer, really—to steer it, and that is your part. If someone else is available to play the music, great. If not, just set the tempo by singing.

After you sing the song through, and the children learn the words and sing it with you, ask them to make a long line, single file, each one holding onto the waist of the child in front. Before the train takes off, lift your hand, pull the bell and do a train whistle, "Ooo, ooo, oooooooooooooo!" Pull the bell again and this is the start of the song. Warn the children to hold on tight and not to let go, no matter what happens, as the train takes

TRAIN IS A-COMIN'

off around the room. As the leader of the train, use your arms as wheels. Bend them at the elbow and keep them stiff, making small circles with them close to your body. The music has a powerful, almost syncopated rhythm, so just step on the strong beats which are underscored. Please note there is an extra underscore on lines 1, 2, and 4.

When the train has gone successfully around the room, try moving it in different tempos. First make it easy: a local train that goes very very slowly and stops at all the stations on the way. Then create an express train, one that stops at only the large stations and goes veryveryveryfast. It will end with lots of laughter and noise and perhaps even split into many parts as it falls off the track, but that is part of the fun.

The next time you play this game, you might want to try inventing new kinds of trains with the children. You can be a stalled train that needs lots of effort on the part of the children to get going again. They may have to step in place lots of times with lots of energy to get you moving. Or maybe you can end the game with a runaway train that goes up the mountain and into the sky.

LOOK MA, NO HANDS!

Number of players: 1 or more

This coordination is difficult for adults, but usually easy for children. It involves learning how to shift weight and balance. The children sit on the floor and cross their feet, then plant them firmly on the floor. They stretch their arms straight out in front of them and say, in unison, "Look Ma, no hands!" and then they push forward and up into a standing position.

Heavy children may have trouble standing, at first. Let them try to push forward and up, but if they still have trouble, take their hands and help them. A little practice and everyone will be able to do it.

It is important to explain to the children that what is easy for some children to do may be harder for others, and vice versa. Everyone needs practice on some things and not on others. They will get the idea, so the child who has trouble with this or any other coordination will not be embarrassed.



Be sure not to use your hands to help yourself up. Charna (left) and Patricia (right) are going to make it. Charna would have an easier time if she didn't tighten up her shoulders. She thinks that will help her up, but it only makes it more difficult. Patricia is getting ready to rise beautifully, by shifting her weight forward from her bottom onto her thighs and feet.

MUSICAL STORIES

A musical story is narrative that combines drama, music and movement. It may have music throughout or use just a theme that comes at the start or finish of the story. The children act out part or all of the action.

At the beginning, the storyteller sets the stage and tells everyone what to expect and what to do during the narrative.

Here are three musical stories that are easy to organize and perform successfully. You can use them in a school program or just for fun.

Kitty Cats

Number of players: 2 or more

All the children are kittens. They start by curling up and going to sleep. Have them sit near you, at the piano or in a corner of the room, while you sing, to the tune of "Molly Malone":

**I'm a little gray kitty,
Curled up in a ball.
My feet are tucked under
So small, so small.**

**My ears are pointed
To help catch the sound,
For kitty cats listen
To things all around.**

As you go on with the narration, the children act out the story in movement, to each of your directions. Actually say the words that appear in the parentheses, or use your own words to convey the same idea.

Now the kitty cat feels the nice warm sun on his nose and on his toes, so he knows it's time for him to wake up.

He stretches one paw way up in the air (stretch one arm)—and then the other paw (stretch the other arm).

Now stretch one leg way up high (stretch one leg in the air) and the other leg even higher (turn over on your back and stretch your leg).

And now the kitty cat stretches its back. It puts its hands on the floor, and its feet near its hands, and stretches its legs way up and down, up and down, until its back is all stretched out.

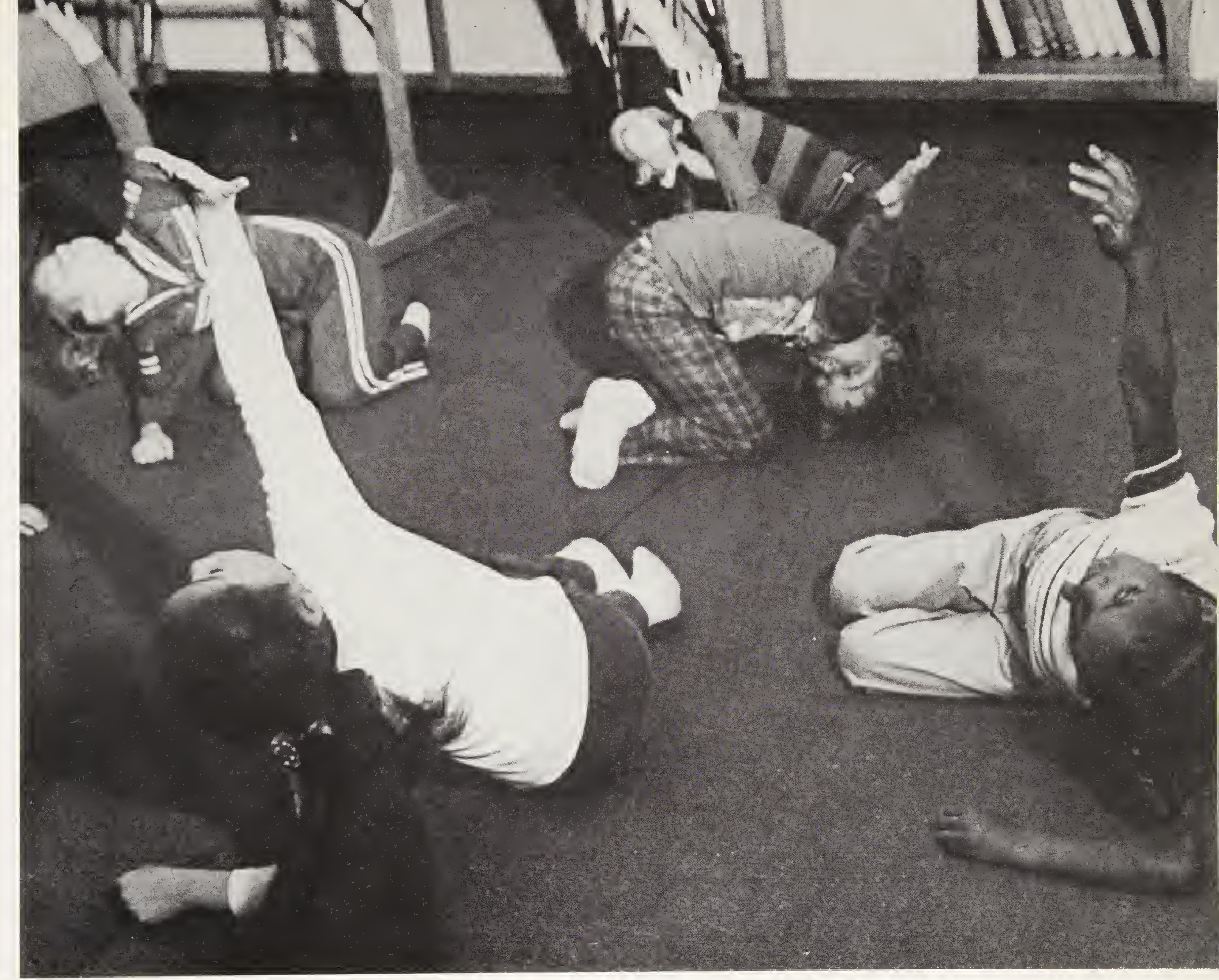
And now the kitty cat hears a rumbling noise in his belly, and that means it's hungry. So it begins to walk around and look for its milk.

(You know that kitty cats never walk on their knees. They walk on all their 4 feet.)

And now the kitty cat smells its milk and gets down on its knees and laps it up with its tongue.

Now the kitty cat's belly is full and it is very happy. So it jumps up and it begins to dance. And it claps its hands and it jumps and turns, and it dances round and round.

These stories are available with music throughout on Dimension 5's records for children, as indicated for each piece.



There's more room than you think in the classroom. Here the teacher has pushed the desks aside so these cats have room to stretch, which they are doing really well. Notice that their bodies are leaning to the side as they stretch a paw, and their bodies will lean to the other side as they change paws.

Kitty Cats

(Oh, how nice, little kitty cat. You dance beautifully!)

Until all of a sudden, the kitty cat jumps way up in the air and falls down.

Poor kitty, it hurt its leg, so now when it walks, it has to walk with one foot up in the air. (Don't walk on your knees, walk on your feet!)

Its foot feels much better, but it's getting dark and it's tired of playing all day long.

So it stretches one paw up in the air—and then the other paw—and one leg way up high, and then the other leg even higher.

And now kitty cats, let me see you stretch your backs once more. Here we go—Uuuup and Dowwwwn, and Uuuup and Dowwwwn—and the kitty cats wave goodnight to all their friends, and curl up in a little ball and go to sleep.

At this point, repeat the song you started with and the story is over.



Skating Party

Number of players: 1 or more

This story, to the music of "Skater's Waltz," is especially popular with young children. Start by saying and doing all the motions with the children:

Spoken: **Put your ice skates on everybody!**
Lace them up very tight.
Make a bow and pull it hard.
Here we go!

Now explain to the children how very slippery the ice is, and how careful they have to be when they stand up in their skates or they may fall. Ask them to hold their arms out to the side to help balance themselves. Show them how to lean from one side to the other as they take big long gliding steps. Then everyone sings—and skates:



Come skate with me
Over the ice.
Come and I'll show you
To skate is nice.

First on your left foot,
Then on your right,
Skating in winter
Is oh, so nice.

Skating Party

Before you play the second part of the music, ask the children if they can do fancy tricks on the ice. Can they turn and jump on the ice? Can they skate backwards? Let's see! Now play the second part of the music.



Go back to Part I

Next ask the children if they can be racers. People who race on ice skates have a special kind of skates with very long blades, so a racer puts both hands behind his back, bends his body way forward—parallel to the floor—and takes very long gliding steps with each foot, and really covers a lot of ground. Play the second part of the music again while they race.

Skating Party

Now play the first part of the music again. Tell the children that they can be any kind of skater that they want to be—a regular skater leaning from side to side; one that can do fancy tricks and dance on the ice and skate backwards; or a racer. They can even change from one to the other.

When you come to the end of the song, ask all the children to skate over to you and then tell them that they are beginning to slip and slide in place and finally, when you play a loud chord on the piano, they all fall down.

> **Now we're going to take off our skates.**
> **So untie the bow and unwind the laces.**
> **Now open the laces until your skate is loose.**

Take your skates off, too. As you pull the first one off, you say, "I got it!" and the children will answer, "I got it!"

> **Now let's untie the other lace. This is the stubborn skate. It doesn't want to come off. Open the laces and try to pull it off. MMMMMMph. It doesn't come off.**
>
> **Let's open the laces some more. MMMMMMMMMph. Still doesn't come off.**
>
> **Now for the last time, let's open the laces all the way down. Now PULL REAL HARD—I GOT IT!**

"I got it!" will come the refrain.




Tokey
Music by
BRUCE HAACK
A fright - ened pup - py dog was he And To - key was his
name. He tried to be a big brave dog But he al - ways was a -
fraid. A - fraid of cars – A - fraid of bikes – A - fraid of rol - ler skates–A -
fraid of mice – A fright - ened pup - py dog was he, To - key was a - fraid!

Tokey

Number of players: 2 or more

This musical story has lots of action. The hero is a frightened little puppy by the name of Tokey. Tell the children that they may be Tokey and act out the entire story as you tell it to them. Choose one girl for the role of Tokey's friend and have her stand with you at the piano until it is time for her part.

Make believe that Tokey has a little house along one of the walls and ask the children to climb into that house (each child has a separate house along the wall that you designate) and to curl up in it.

First sing the song to the children. When you sing it in the story, ask the children to join you.

Once upon a time there was a frightened puppy dog by the name of Tokey. He was afraid of everyone and everything. He was even afraid of his own shadow!

A frightened puppy dog was he
And Tokey was his name.
He tried to be a big brave dog
But he always was afraid.

Afraid of cars—
Afraid of bikes—
Afraid of roller skates—
Afraid of mice—

A frightened puppy dog was he,
Tokey was afraid!

One day Tokey crept out of his house and looked around quickly, up and down and all around, but he was so frightened, he ran right back into his house, curled up in a little ball, and shook and shook!

If the children don't realize that they are to act this out, remind them to do everything that you say, because they are Tokey. Ask them to shake every part of their bodies, their heads, shoulders, tails. Also remind them to run on 4 legs, not on their knees.

"I will try again," said Tokey, so he crept out of his house once more, and this time he heard something. So he cocked his head to one side and listened.

RINGGGGGGG, RINGGGGGGG. It was only the telephone ringing, but Tokey got so scared, he ran right back into his house, curled up in a little ball and shooook and shooook.

"Oh dear," said Tokey, "This will never do. This time I promise I'm going to be brave!"

So once more he crept out of his house.

Tell the child playing the little girl to start skipping or galloping out into the garden.

But this time he saw a little girl, picking flowers in the garden—picking them, and smelling them, and putting them into her bouquet—and Tokey thought to himself, "This is just the kind of little girl I always wanted to love," but he was afraid, so right where he was, he curled up into a little ball and shooook and shoooooook.

Tokey

Remind Tokey to shake all over—his shoulders, his tail and his head.

Then the little girl noticed Tokey, and she came over and gently touched Tokey on the top of the head.

At this point, the little girl should touch each child.

Tokey got so scared, he jumped way up high in the sky—so high that it took him a long time to come down again. And when he came down, he began to chase his tail around and around in a tiny circle. And the little girl looked at him and laughed and laughed.



"Oh, what a silly dog you are," she said. "I like you and I would like to be your friend."

Tokey thought . . .

Tokey leans his head against one arm that is propped up by the other arm.

And he thought . . .

Do the same movement on the other side.

And he thought and thought . . .

Keep changing.

And thoughtandthoughtandthought. And then he thought "I THINK SHE REALLY MEANS IT," so wherever she went, Tokey went right behind her.

The children form a procession with the little girl in the lead.

And when she ran, Tokey would run on four legs, and when she jumped, Tokey would stand up on his back legs, hold his front paws up and he would jump right behind her. And guess what? You probably guessed already. Tokey and the little girl were the best of friends and TOKEY WAS NEVER AFRAID ANY MORE.

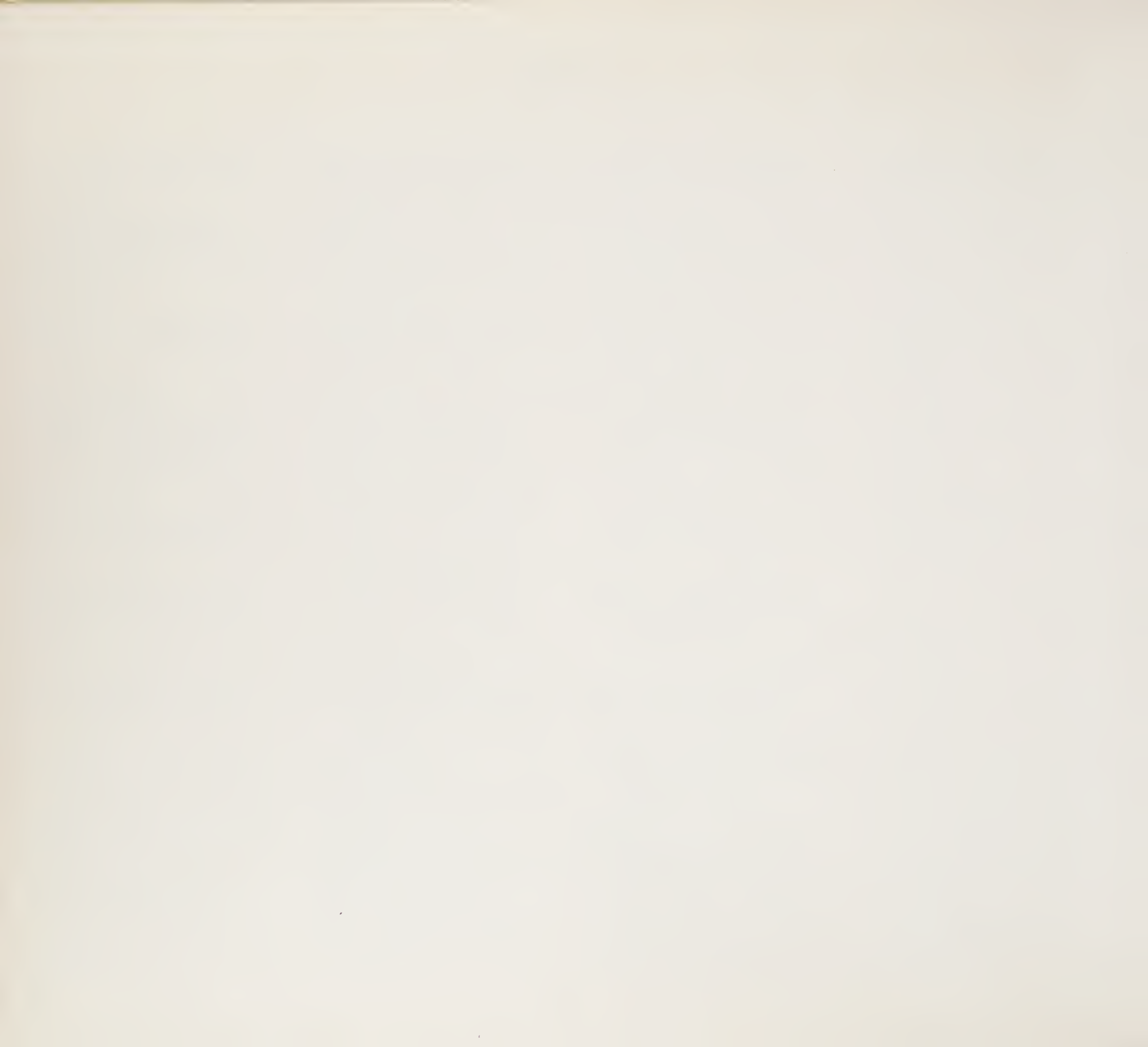
Play the music again, and this time you and the children just hum along with it.

AGE RANGES

	AGES						
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A-Hunting We Will Go		*	*	*	*	*	
Baskets			*	*	*	*	
Carousel			*	*	*	*	*
Catch a Star and Put It in Your Pocket		*	*	*	*	*	*
Chug, Chug, Chug			*	*	*	*	
Clap Your Hands		*	*	*	*	*	
Dog Through the Hoop		*	*	*	*	*	*
A Duck Can Dive		*	*	*	*		
Fabulous Fingers	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Five Little Chickadees		*	*	*	*	*	
Flying Horses			*	*	*	*	*
Humpty Dumpty	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hurry, Little Johnny		*	*	*	*	*	
I Am a Little Busy Bee			*	*	*	*	*
I Had a Little Sailboat		*	*	*	*	*	
I Met a Little Duck		*	*	*	*	*	
I'm Very Very Small or I'm Very Very Tall	*	*	*	*	*		
Indian Drummer Boy		*	*	*	*	*	
Indian Rhythm				*	*	*	
Kitty Cats		*	*	*	*	*	
Let's Go Up in the Swing	*	*	*	*	*		

	AGES						
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Look Ma, No Hands			*	*	*	*	
Monday Tuesday Wednesday				*	*	*	*
My Name Is Little Yellow Bird	*	*	*	*	*	*	
My Pigeon House		*	*	*	*	*	
Open Shut Them	*	*	*	*	*		
Peter Peter Penguin			*	*	*	*	*
Picking Apples from the Tree		*	*	*	*		
Proud Ponies			*	*	*	*	*
Rock-A-Bye Baby	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Rubber Bands			*	*	*	*	*
Sally Go Round the Moon	*	*	*	*	*		
Skating Party			*	*	*	*	*
This Old Man		*	*	*	*	*	*
Tokey				*	*	*	*
Train Is A-Comin'			*	*	*	*	*
Turkey Is a Funny Bird	*	*	*	*	*		
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star			*	*	*	*	*
We Sail and We Sail and We Stop!		*	*	*	*	*	*
What Can She Be Up in the Tree?	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Where Is Thumbkin?		*	*	*	*		
Who's That Tapping at the Window?	*	*	*	*			

INDEX





SINGING and DANCING GAMES
for the very young



A high-spirited tugboat fleet that chugs over the sea and under human bridges—

A hilarious "waddle walk" that delights the "ducks"—

A hot comet in your pocket—

You'll also find trains and turkeys, penguins and poodles, birds and boats, and cats and worms and Indians in this magical treasury of games, songs and dances for children from age 2 — an age which is almost always ignored in music and dance education — to 8!

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Esther L. Nelson is the author of "Dancing Games for Children of All Ages," "Movement Games for Children of All Ages," and "Musical Games for Children of All Ages." A leading dance educator, she is the same Miss Nelson who, with Bruce Haack, originated the "Dance, Sing and Listen" series and other records for children, so highly acclaimed by educators, dancers, parents, and especially by children.





STERLING PUBLISHING CO., INC. NEW YORK